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Ethnic minorities in Italian cultural institutions

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Abstract

In summer 2020, after the protests for George Floyd's killing, the activist movement Black Lives Matter gained international attention spreading from the United States to other countries among which Italy. The protests questioned the dominant Western gaze and put the accent on the way we represent the world in our museums. These events, along with a growing attention on matters such as decolonisation of culture, inclusion, and diversity had a significant influence on the analysis of the roles of ethnic minorities inside the art world both as producers (artists, story-tellers, curators, staff members) and consumers (visitors).

This dissertation aims to understand how, in the context of decoloniality and under the influence of Black Lives Matter activism, ethnic minorities find a place and are represented as producers and consumers in contemporary art system and specifically in museums. The purpose is to analyse more in detail the Italian context, focusing on three different Italian cultural institutions that at different levels had tried in the last years to find disparate ways to include and represent people coming from minority groups and living in Italy.

The present dissertation is based on a review of the literature on post-coloniality and decoloniality and on the decolonisation of cultural institutions, on articles about the Black Lives Matter movement and on the analysis of some case studies of museums that put in place experiments and strategies aiming at including and representing cultural minorities inside the art system.

The results of this dissertation demonstrate that while in the United States and in the United Kingdom the dialogue, the studies and the statistics around this theme are quite developed, in Europe and, specifically in Italy, we are still at the beginning, but many cultural institutions, from bigger and public ones such as the MAXXI in Rome to smaller and private ones such as the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, are trying to face these issues and to include people belonging to ethnic minorities in their projects both as producers and consumers.

Introduction

In the post-colonial and globalised epoch we are living in, cultural institutions in Western countries are trying to become more inclusive and diversified and to involve ethnic minority groups in their activities. Furthermore, the rising of the Black Lives Matter protests in Summer 2020 has given a great input to the ongoing process of diversification and decolonisation of the art system. However, there is still a long way to go, especially in countries like Italy where cultural institutions are still perceived as spaces almost exclusively dedicated to white people.

This research aims at illustrating the roles that people belonging to ethnic minority groups have nowadays inside cultural institutions around the Western world, to demonstrate that they still occupy a marginal place, but that the situation started to change and museums are trying to implement strategies in order to decolonise themselves and to become more equal and diverse. After a more general overview, the dissertation will focus on the Italian context and on Italian case studies.

This introductory chapter will provide an introduction to the study by first discussing the background, the context and the relevance of our dissertation, followed by the research question, aims and objectives, the justification and finally the limitations we encountered during this project. At the end, we will briefly outline the structure of the study.

The issues of accessibility and inclusivity have always been central topic in museum studies, but it is only in the last decades that experts started to consider the category of ethnic minorities as possible producers and consumers of cultural institutions. The first researches in this direction were made in the United States where, since the '80s, scholars have been analysing the levels of inclusivity of ethnic minority artists (Pindell, 1987), staff members (Westermann, Sweeney & Schonfeld, 2019) and visitors (National Endowment for the Arts & United State Bureau of the Census, 1982) inside museums. These researches have shown that ethnic minorities still occupy a marginal place inside cultural institutions and this is why we decided to move on towards the analysis of some strategies of diversification and decolonisation implemented by museums around the Western world. In order to do it, we based our analysis on studies of scholars and activists such as Françoise Vergès, Bénédicte Savoy, Felwine Sarr, Giulia Grechi, and the group

Decolonize this place, among others. As far as it concerns the Italian context, there are no satisfactory statistics about the levels of inclusion of ethnic minorities in cultural institutions, but the researches of the work groups *Patrimonio e Intercultura* of the Fondazione ISMU and *Patrimonio di Storie*, which provided us with insights on intercultural projects realised by Italian museums, were very useful to us.

The starting points of this dissertation are the analysis of the post-colonial epoch in which we are living and the meaning and consequences of the Black Lives Matter protests around the world. Numerous studies (Gandhi, 1998; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Bachelot Nguyen, 2018) have investigated the concepts of coloniality, decoloniality and post-coloniality, but we still lack of a scholar analysis of the consequences that the Black Lives Matter movement had on the art system. Another aspect that has been widely investigated is the level of ethnic diversity among the artists, staff members and visitors in the United States cultural institution. However, there is no such research focusing on Europe or Italy. More in general, topics such as inclusivity, diversity and decolonisation have not been much addressed in Italy. As a result, the existing research is inadequate for understanding the roles occupied by ethnic minorities inside Italian cultural institutions.

Given this lack of research, this study will aim to acknowledge the relation between ethnic minorities and museums, especially in Italy. The objectives of the present dissertation are: to have a better comprehension of the concept of post-coloniality and decoloniality and to study the reach of the Black Lives Matter movement; to acknowledge the position occupied by people belonging to ethnic minority groups inside cultural institutions in Western countries; to analyse some strategies of diversification, inclusion and decolonisation; and, finally, to have a more precise idea of the situation in Italy. This study, therefore, aims at answering the following research question: *in the context of decoloniality and under the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement, how people belonging to ethnic minorities find a place and are represented as producers and consumers in the contemporary art system? Which is the situation in Italian cultural institutions?*

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the relation between ethnic minority groups and cultural institutions by offering a general overview of the major statistics realised in the field in the last decades and providing a clear image of the

marginalised status of people belonging to ethnic minorities inside the art system of Western countries. On the other hand, this study contributes to the demonstration of the backwardness of Italy concerning these matters. The other interesting contribution offered by this dissertation is the detailed analysis of some virtuous projects realised by three Italian museums that can be applicable by other institutions in different contexts as strategies of inclusion and diversification.

However, this study has some limitations due to some methodological problems and to the absence of all the needed resources. First of all, the number of case studies we took into consideration, namely three, is too narrow to provide a complete and reliable overview of the roles occupied by people belonging to ethnic minorities inside Italian cultural institutions. Furthermore, we took into consideration only virtuous case studies and this choice contributes to making the obtained results not very representative of the reality. The data sample we analysed is not always complete. As a matter of fact, we had not at our disposal the complete catalogues of the artworks present in the collections of the museums and the museums often did not provide us with the information we required, for example the ones about the visitors and their provenance and ethnicity. Another limitation is constituted by the fact that we had not the opportunity to submit questionnaires to the artists in order to establish their ethnicity and, as we will explain later on, this is considered the best criteria to follow in order to collect data about ethnicity. We were obliged to use another strategy, but the criteria we selected risk to be overly subjective and to oversimplify the actual situation. The last limitation we would like to stress out is the fact that we tend to compare the United States with Italy, but we should keep in mind that these countries have very different histories and the ethnicity of their citizens is not really comparable.

To conclude, we would like to briefly illustrate the structure of the dissertation.

In the first chapter, “*Context*”, we are going to introduce the context of the study and it will be divided into three parts. In the first one, we are going to address some concepts, such as colonialism, post-colonialism, or coloniality, in order to understand what post-coloniality and decoloniality signify and what does living in a post-colonial era mean. In the second section, we are going to talk about the Black Lives Matter movement, we are going to trace its origins, describe its infrastructure, analyse the spread that the protests had in summer 2020 and their consequences on the art system around the world. In the

third part, we are going to focus on Italy. Firstly, we are going to examine the importance that colonialism and its aftermath had in shaping the Italian culture. Secondly, we would like to analyse the Black Lives Matter protests that took place in Italian squares in the summer of 2020, their peculiarities vis-a-vis the U.S. protests and the consequences they had on the perception that common people have of matters like racism, discrimination and inclusion.

In the second chapter, “*Ethnic minorities and art the system*”, we are going to consider ethnic minorities in the art world as producers, consumers and distributors. In the first part, we are going to analyse some statistics about the United States and United Kingdom showing that people belonging to ethnic minority groups are still marginalised inside the art system. Then, we are going to focus on the strategies that cultural institutions around the Western world are implementing in order to become more diverse, inclusive and to decolonised themselves. We divided these strategies based on the subject they are addressed to: the museum staff members, the museum visitors, and the collections. In the last part, we would like to analyse the Italian situation. Firstly, we are going to address the lack of statistics about the relations between ethnic minority groups and Italian cultural institutions. Then, we are going to provide the reader with some examples of strategies and initiatives put in place by Italian museums in order to involve a broader range of citizens in their activities.

In the third chapter, “*Italian case studies*”, we are going to present three different Italian cultural institutions, namely the GAMeC, the MAXXI, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, and to analyse their relationships with people belonging to ethnic minority groups living on the Italian territory. In the first part, we are going to offer a brief description of these three cultural institutions. In particular, we are going to focus on the history of the three museums, on their collections, and on their institutional missions. In the second section, we are going to introduce some methodological and terminological issues and to establish some guidelines we are going to follow in our analyses. In the third part, we are going to examine the levels of inclusion of people belonging to ethnic minorities inside the three cultural institutions we selected as case studies and, once again, we are going to analyse the three main groups of subjects operating inside the museums: the artists, the staff members and the visitors. At the end of the chapter, we are going to present some of the virtuous projects put in place by the GAMeC, the MAXXI and the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation, in order to include, both as producers and

consumers, and to represent people belonging to ethnic minorities living on the Italian territory.

Chapter 1. Context

1.1 Post-coloniality and decoloniality

This dissertation aims at analysing the role that ethnic minorities play inside museums and cultural institutions in general. Are they included? Do they feel well represented? Do they feel a sense of belonging? Is there enough diversification? Do they occupy a significant place both as consumers and producers?

In order to answer these questions, we have to consider the epoch in which we are living and to take in the concepts of post-coloniality and decoloniality. Afterwards, we need to look at the general context trying to understand which role museums played, and still play, in developing and spreading a colonial thinking and how they are trying to face the need to decolonise Western culture and include people coming from different cultural backgrounds. Issues like representation, inclusion and diversification that are at the centre of the analysis in this dissertation, are strongly related with post-colonial theory.

Post-colonial theory is a critical theory which emerged in the 1980s in the United States and United Kingdom as part of a larger field of politicised studies such as critical race studies and feminism. This theory is concerned with the political, aesthetic, economic, historical and social impact of the European colonial rule around the world in the period between the 18th and the 20th century. Post-colonial theory comprises many different nuances and thoughts, all of which share the fundamental claim that the world in which we live cannot be understood without considering the history of colonialism and imperialism. In fact, the Western world's history and culture have been deeply influenced by the encounter with the colonised populations and the oppression and violence perpetrated by the European colonisers against the native inhabitants of the colonies. Post-colonial theory recognises that any discourse is historically rooted in a particular ideological framework and its purpose is to reveal the power relations inherent in any discourse in ways that enable subaltern voices to emerge.

In order to better understand post-colonial theory and the concepts of postcolonialism/postcoloniality and decolonialism/decoloniality, we should start from the definitions of the terms colonialism and imperialism that are often wrongly considered interchangeable. The Collins Dictionary (Collins, n. d.) provides the following definition

of the term colonialism: “the practice by which a powerful country directly controls less powerful countries and uses their resources to increase its own power and wealth”. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (Merriam-Webster, n. d.) instead defines it as the “control by one power over a dependent area or people”. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford English, n. d.), the term colonialism comes from the Latin *colonus* which means “settler” and describes “a settlement in a new country; a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state; the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors, as long as the connection with the parent state is kept up”. Even if colonialism assumed different shapes in different times and places, we can always find some common aspects: the presence of a powerful country that occupies a land subjecting the original inhabitants most often in a traumatic way.

Colonialism has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history and not only a specific practice of the Modern era (Federici, 2004). For example, we can talk about colonialism when the Greeks founded colonies in southern Italy or when Romans settled colonies throughout the Mediterranean Sea or when the Vikings established colonies in Britain, Ireland, Iceland and in other areas. Modern colonialism, however, has some peculiar characteristics that make it different from the pre-modern one. First of all, modern colonialism was developed alongside capitalism in Western Europe and modern colonisers imposed Western European economies on the colonised peoples creating a flow of human and natural resources in two directions: from the mother land to the colony and vice versa. However, this distinction between pre-capitalist colonialism and capitalist colonialism is not enough to refer to the latter as imperialism. Imperialism is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge, n. d.) as “a system in which a country rules other countries, sometimes having used force to get power over them” and as “the policy, practice or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas” by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Merriam-Webster, n. d.).

The term imperialism, as well as colonialism, can be linked to a particular stage of development of capitalism (Lenin, 1917) because European powers in the 18th century needed new places where to invest the funds coming from the capitalistic economy and therefore started to conquer new colonies. Getting back to the difference between the terms colonialism and imperialism, we could conclude, quoting Ania Loomba, that

colonialism is “the takeover of territory, appropriation of material resources, exploitation of labour and interference with political and cultural structures of another territory or nation” while imperialism is a global system and “the differences between the two words are defined differently depending on their historical mutations” (Loomba, 2005, p. 11).

These different meanings attached to the words colonialism and imperialism make the understanding of the term postcolonialism even more complicated. Broadly speaking, it can be defined as the critical and interdisciplinary study of the effects and legacy of colonialism and imperialism on cultures and societies. It is concerned with how European nations conquered, controlled and exploited the people and the lands of the colonies in the so called “Third World” but also with the way in which those colonised communities have responded and resisted to these encroachments. Postcolonial theory examines the social and political relationships that are at the basis of colonialism and neo-colonialism. According to Vives and Mohabir, in the *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Vives & Mohabir, 2020, p. 289):

Chiefs concerns in postcolonial literature are the production of colonial knowledge, discourse, and representation of colonized peoples; the construction of collective identities before, during and after decolonization; and the ongoing dispossession of (formerly) colonised peoples. In this way, postcolonialism intersects with topics such as the Black Atlantic, decolonization, and/or labour migrations, while serving as an umbrella term to think through relations among colonial practices emerging in different places or times.

Postcolonial studies are a body of theories rooted in cultural and literary studies which developed after the decline of European colonialism in the mid-20th century in regions undergoing decolonisation. As a matter of fact, the formulations of the postcolonial theory belonged to non-Western theorists, such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, who lived in colonised countries. Postcolonial studies are characterised by a great variety of approaches and theoreticians that have enabled a complex interdisciplinary dialogue but not a uniformity of approach. As a consequence, there is little consensus on a common definition of the concept of postcolonial. The understanding of the term is complicated by the prefix “post” because it implies an aftermath both in a temporal and an ideological sense. On the one hand, seen from the ideological perspective, the “post” seems to imply that colonialism has been overcome, but since the inequities established by colonialism

and imperialism are still evident in ex-colonies and in the mother land where many people are still subjected to oppression and marginalisation deriving from colonialism, it is premature to speak about a demise of colonialism. Analysed from a temporal point of view, on the other hand, the term postcolonialism seems to indicate the time after colonialism ceased or the time following the political independence of the colonies. However, this concept cannot be used univocally because the decolonisation process lasted three centuries and took many forms, thus it is not possible to establish when exactly the so-called postcolonial period begins. Moreover, we cannot understand the prefix “post” in a temporal sense simply for the fact that “colonialism is a past that does not pass. It changes forms and methods of expression, it changes languages and places of action, but its power has not yet run out” (Grechi, 2021, p. 21, my translation).

Françoise Vergès (2018) speaks about the need of questioning Western temporalities, namely, past, present and future, because the colonial past has not passed at all, *it is a present that still lasts*. Therefore, according to Loomba (2005, p.13) the word postcolonial is “not only inadequate to the task of defining contemporary realities in the once-colonised countries, and vague in terms of indicating a specific period of history, but may also cloud the internal social and racial differences of many societies”. As we have already mentioned, it is better to think of postcolonialism not as something coming after colonialism and decolonisation or as the end of colonialism, but as an attempt to challenge the colonial discourse, the power structure and social hierarchies. As Giulia Grechi (2021) highlights, the prefix “post” should be intended as posthumous, as something that survived its own death and that gave birth to new economic, political and cultural colonialities.

As a matter of fact, colonialism may be over in some countries that are now independent but there is a new form of colonialism that is the economic, political and cultural dependency on the ex-mother land. The term neo-colonialism describes the fact that some Western countries still have an influence on ex-colonies that are now independent but that are still economically exploited and affected by the continuation of the economic, cultural and linguistic power relationships even if there is no more a direct military control or a hegemony over them. The term neo-colonialism was first used by the former President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah in his book *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965). Here the author states that “the neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage” (p. 3). Colonialism has not ended, it just

changed its way of expression and the result of neo-colonialism, according to President Nkrumah, is that “foreign capital is used for the exploitation rather than for the development of less developed parts of the world” (Ibidem). To live in postcolonial societies means to live in a space-time in which coloniality continues to act through a complex system of privileges and oppressions that we have interiorised to such an extent that we perceived them as normal until we do not start to recognise them and to decolonise our way of thinking, communicating, consuming, etc.

Postcolonialism can also be seen as a response and a resistance to amnesia, to the active and selective forgetfulness, to the construction of myths and to the repression typical of the colonial aftermath and of a general strategy to deal with difficult memories. Once the process of decolonisation has started and new independent nation-states are born, people often feel the desire to forget the colonial past and the atrocities connected with the conquest of the colonies. This postcolonial amnesia is a symptom of the need of a new start leaving behind all the memories related to the colonial oppression that are painful both for the colonised people and for the colonisers. However, the amnesia of these events is not a way to surpass colonialism. Therefore, postcolonialism is the right frame in which to address the colonial past that must be remembered and recalled (Gandhi, 1998).

In light of this, we can affirm that even if the process of decolonisation, meant as the process by which a country that was previously a colony becomes politically independent, that started in the second half of the 20th century and lasted many decades, is well underway and most of the ex-colonies are now independent nations, the process of decoloniality still has a long way to go.

As Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007, p. 243) highlights:

Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations.

Although the era of colonialism has come to an end, coloniality persists because the world created by decades of colonialism is still present in our everyday life under different forms and we still have a colonial conception of society. Therefore, decoloniality is different

from decolonisation and it refers to the logic and to the matrix of power created by the aftermath of colonisation and it is a way to explore how colonialism and, more in general, modernity and capitalism have influenced our natural world. It is a method to restore and repair the multiplicity of lives, cultures, knowledge and traditions of colonised people. In fact, the task of decoloniality after decolonisation is more focused on epistemology and knowledge rather than on the state (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), it is a radical transformation of our world also through the imaginary and the representations of the cultural and artistic field. Decoloniality is a political practice, a long and continue process which requires an interior and exterior destruction and disalienation (Bachelot Nguyen, 2018). This process cannot follow only one itinerary because it tries to answer to an enormous diversity of memories, sometimes conflictual, and it has to admit different genders, sexualities, spaces, subjective formations and contexts that intersect the ones with the others. As Françoise Vergès (2018, p. 120, my translation) writes:

To decolonize is to learn to see again, in a transversal and intersectional¹ way, to de-naturalise the world in which we evolve, made by human beings and by economic and political regimes. It is to learn to put all the pieces together like a puzzle and to study the relations, the circulations, the crossings. It is about understanding the world around us, not neglecting the small or the big, exploring the flaws, conflicts, betrayals, complicities, solidarities, loneliness, resistances.

First of all, in order to decolonise Western society, it is necessary to become aware of the role and the weight that the Western world had in the past centuries, and this is possible only through education. Only once we have a full consciousness of this, can we start destroy the roots of the colonial environment in which we live allowing future generations to regain possession of their history, destiny and life. As we have mentioned, decoloniality is a long process that must include institutions like universities and museums that still nowadays are undermined by a colonial thinking.

¹ With the term “intersectionality”, coined and conceptualized by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989, we intend the intersection and overlap of multiple factors, such as gender, sexuality, caste, race, class, religion, age, nationality and disability, which, combined together, create different forms of privilege, oppression or discrimination. Intersectionality is an analytic framework used to study how interlocking systems of power and aspects of a person’s social and political identities affect marginalised people or empower privileged people. Therefore, in order to understand the racialisation of oppressed groups, it is necessary to study the ways in which structures, social processes and social representations are formed by gender, class, sexuality, etc.

1.2 The Black Lives Matter movement and the consequences on the art system

The story of the Black Lives Matter movement begins with the murder of Trayvon Martin, a seventeen-year-old boy shot dead by the neighbourhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman while he was walking in a street wearing a hoodie and holding a soft drink and some candies. In the summer of 2013, Zimmerman was found not guilty on all charges related to Martin's death. It was at this moment that three black women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi, created the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter as a call to action for black people in response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-black racism (Lebron, 2017). Initially, the movement began with the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media and as an online community to help combat anti-black racism across United States and connect black people from all over the globe providing activists with a shared set of principles and objectives.

A year later, two other African-American men were killed by police officers. In July 2014, Eric Garner died in New York City, after a New York City Police Department officer put him in a banned chokehold while arresting him on suspicion of selling single cigarettes from packs without tax stamps (Baker, Goodman & Mueller, 2015). One month later, on August 9, the eighteen-years-old Michael Brown was shot dead by the white police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. Michael Brown's death resulted in protests and unrests that continued for more than a week in Ferguson forcing the police to establish a night curfew and pushing the Missouri governor to declare the state of emergency (Day, 2015). In support to the communities of Ferguson and St. Louis that were protesting and that were being criticised by media, tear gassed and pepper sprayed by the police, Darnell Moore and Patrisse Khan-Cullors organised a national ride that was called Black Life Matters Freedom Ride to Ferguson. Over 600 people gathered in search of justice for Michael Brown and for all of those who have been torn apart by anti-black racism and police violence (Matthews & Noor, 2017).

Inspired by what happened in Ferguson, activists came back to their towns and began to transform the Black Lives Matter movement into a nationally recognised organisation: Black Lives Matter Global Network.

Today, Black Lives Matter is a decentralised and chapter-based political and social movement that comprises a broad array of people and organisations in the United States and abroad. The movement advocates against police brutality and violence against black

communities, it works in favour of various policy changes related to black liberation and more generally it tries to eradicate white supremacy. The project is now a member-led network of more than forty chapters in which the members organise and build local strength to intervene against violence inflicted on black people by the State and vigilantes, to change policy, amplify African-American stories and support all black people (Matthews & Noor, 2017).

The main characteristic of this infrastructure is that it is adaptive and decentralised but has a set of guiding principles; it cannot be identified with any single leader. Black Lives Matter represents an ideal that motivates, mobilises and informs actions and programs of many local branches of the movement. Black Lives Matter expresses a desire for equity and respect and also an inclusive and spacious movement. As a matter of fact, Black Lives Matter activists believe, according to an intersectional approach, that it is necessary to affirm the lives of all those who have been marginalised, also within black liberation movements, such as black queer and transgender persons, disabled persons, undocumented persons, women, and all black lives. Therefore, Black Lives Matter voices support for movements such as LGBTQ activism, feminism and immigration. Another noteworthy element is the conspicuous use of social media platforms made by the movement in order to reach people rapidly and across the globe, everything was born from a sort of hashtag activism in 2013 (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018).

After the events in Ferguson, the Black Lives Matter movement started to spread all over the world giving birth to different organisations and protests in other countries such as Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, Denmark, France, Japan and New Zealand. But the real boost arrived in 2020 when protests caused by George Floyd's death brought the Black Lives Matter movement back to national and international headlines.

On May 25th 2020, the Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin killed the black man George Floyd and the video of the murder showing Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck for several minutes while Floyd pleaded for his life repeating the sentence "I can't breathe" was spread around the world. At the end of May, over 450 protests were held in different cities around the United States and in three continents (Wu, Chiwaya & Smith, 2020). From May 22nd to August 22nd, there were more than 10.600 Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the United States with the participation of an estimated fifteen million to twenty-six million people (Buchanan, Bui & Patel, 2020).

The enormous resonance and echo that the Black Lives Matter movement gained in the last years and especially in the summer of 2020 is demonstrated also by the fact that the art world recognised these protests as one of the most significant and relevant events of the year. Started as a protest in opposition to police violence against black people in the United States, the Black Lives Matter movement has catalysed activists across the world and has completely reshaped the cultural landscape in which the art system operates.

This power has been acknowledged by one of the most influential contemporary art magazine, ArtReview, which since 2002 publishes an annual Power 100 list² of the most powerful figures in contemporary art and that last year chose the Black Lives Matter movement as the most powerful force that shaped the arts in this historical moment. The activist movement Black Lives Matter got the highest place in the ranking because, as we can read in the official website:

It has come to symbolize a global reckoning on racial justice and a paradigm shift in contemporary culture. And as it spreads around the world of art, it impacts on how everyone makes work, displays collections and exhibitions, and engages with the public. In the process it has triggered a self-reckoning, a consideration of our own biases, complicities and allyships.

Moreover, Black Lives Matter stood out from the other activist movements for the strength of its focus on the structures of power that generate inequality and are often disregarded, even inside the art system, and towards debates around issues such as representation, identity and reproduction of injustice. The structure of the movement itself, decentralised and independent, offers an example of a more decolonised and fairer system that is also applicable to the arts.

The importance attached by ArtReview and by its global list to these issues is shown also by other personalities featuring in the 2020 annual ranking: the second position is occupied by the collective Ruangrupa that will curate the next edition of Documenta and that deals with topics like colonialism; at the third place we find the art historians Felwine

² The list is established by a network of twenty art world insiders and outsiders coming from all over the globe. The nominations received by this network are then synthesised into a global list. The 2020 list puts the emphasis on the circulation of ideas and values more than on works by single artists or groups, which is why activist movements such as Black Lives Matter find a relevant place in it.

Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy authors of an influential report³ (2018) about the African artefacts preserved inside French museums and about the restitutions of those artworks that have an illicit origin. Other people somehow related to black culture and colonialism are the American artist and filmmaker Arthur Jafa (sixth place), the director of the Studio Museum in Harlem Thelma Golden (eight place) and the “activist” collector and champion of African-American art Pamela J. Joyner (thirteenth place).

The same focus on black art and on issues like colonialism and racism can be traced in the list of the defining art events of 2020 compiled by the editors of ARTNews. The second most important art event of the year, according to the magazine, are the Black Lives Matter statements made by museums after the death of George Floyd. Museums certainly took a stance against racism but the statements are not enough, they need to be followed by practical actions against all forms of discrimination. Another significant phenomenon present in this list is the removal and the following re-contextualisation of monuments dedicated to racist figures such as the one dedicated to Edward Colston, a 17th century merchant and slave trader, in Bristol, England⁴. In this list finds a place also the calling off of the show organised by the Whitney Museum to support charities related to Black Lives Matter after the emergence of a controversy over the museum failing to support any black artist. And finally, another fundamental event of the year, according to ArtReview, is the attempt made by French activists, guided by Mwazulu Diyabanza, to bring an African artefact outside the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. They were blocked from removing the object but the protest generated worldwide coverage (Solomon, 2020).

³ The report on the restitution of African cultural heritage (*Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain*) has been written by the Senegalese academic Felwine Sarr and by the French art historian Bénédicte Savoy in 2018 under the commission of the French president Emmanuel Macron. The report describes the history of African cultural heritage in the context of European colonisation with a focus on illicit appropriations and discusses the central issue of the restitution of African artefacts preserved in French museums.

⁴ The statue dedicated to the slave trader Edward Colston was created in 1895 and erected in a public park in Bristol, England. The statue has been the subject of a controversy beginning in the 1990s because of the reputation of Colston as a slave trader. The Bristol City Council decided to add a plaque in 2018 in order to better contextualise the statue and the role of Colston in the slave trade, however this plaque was never installed. On June the 7th 2020, the statue was toppled, defaced and pushed in the Bristol Harbour during a Black Lives Matter protest. Few days after, the statue was recovered from the harbour and put into storage by the City Council. Four people were charged of criminal damage in relation to the toppling of the sculpture, but on January the 5th 2022, the jury found them not guilty. A report released in 2022 and commissioned by the mayor of Bristol recommended that the statue be permanently displayed in a museum on its side and defaced with paint (Solomon, 2022).

The lists mentioned above is a symptom of the relevance that the Black Lives Matter movement and some related issues have achieved during the last years and the wide influence that this has had on the art world, mostly in the United States but also in other Western countries, where the protests have given life to a vast debate on coloniality, racism and discrimination inside the art system.

The global protests for social justice and racial equity have put a spotlight on museums, their collections and their staff. Many museums have expressed solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement starting from the #museumsrespondtoFerguson initiative that began in December 2014 after the killing of Michael Brown and that set a precedent for using museums as sites of social engagement. The action developed thanks to Gretchen Jennings, a museum consultant and blogger at Museum Commons⁵, who suggested to use the #museumsrespondtoFerguson hashtag to aggregate any museum commentary about the Ferguson episode. In December 2014, the president of the Association of African American Museums published a statement on the association's website offering the condolences to the families of the men killed by the police and urging museums to use their collections and institutions to provide understanding and context. The consequence was the issue of the Joint Statement from Museum Bloggers and Colleagues on Ferguson and Related Events in December 2014 (Jennings, 2015) which, according to Adrienne Russell (2014) explains that all museums:

As mediators of culture and irrespective of collection, focus or mission, should commit to identifying how they can connect to contemporary issues and not only respond but invest in conversations and partnerships that call out inequity and racism and commit to positive change.

The joint statement gave birth to a vast debate among museum professionals about the lack of progress in diversifying boards and staff in museums and about other social issues such as racism and inequality.

But words and statements are not enough and some actions have followed and will hopefully follow in the next years.

⁵ Museum Commons is a website created by the museum professional Gretchen Jennings and it is aim at being “a place of agonistic discussion. A place where differing ideas are considered by equals, and where a serving of disagreement may be considered nourishing” (Museum Commons, n. d.).

One of the effects that accompanied the Black Lives Matter protests was the phenomenon of statue-toppling in the United States and across Europe. In accordance with Achille Mbembe's thought that "the role of colonial statues and monuments is to resurrect, in the present, those who during their own lifetimes threatened blacks with the swords and with death" (2017, p.128), these statues memorialising controversial figures from the colonial past have been destroyed or removed in order to decolonise the public space. This practice was already present before the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, but during the Summer of 2020 it has seen a strong increase generating a debate about the future of these destroyed statues and about the empty spaces left.

Another remarkable consequence of the Black Lives Matter movement protests are the restitutions or reparations of stolen, looted or illegally removed artefacts that constitute the collections of the major European and North American museums. The French art historian Bénédicte Savoy, co-author of the Sarr-Savoy report, speaking to *The Art Newspaper*, said that the Black Lives Matter movement has sped up restitution efforts in France and that she observed a "psychological change in the public" over the past few weeks and months: "particularly after the racist, violent events we have seen in the United States and elsewhere, people are calling for a post-racist society and they are calling for restitution as part of this picture" (Savoy in Shaw, 2020).

In general, there is a call to try to decolonise museum collections re-evaluating, re-contextualising and re-presenting objects from the perspective of the culture from which they came as opposed to that of the white Western man. In order to do so, some museum professionals, curators and managers start to confront the colonial past and the origins of the cultural institutions and of their collections often built upon the exploitation and the suppression of non-Western people.

The Black Lives Matter movement has also emphasised the matter of inclusivity of black people in various fields including the art system. Inclusivity in the art system means efforts to diversify art galleries' rosters, increased visibility of black artists in museum collections and in exhibitions, increased staff diversification and equity in curatorial departments and in the management of cultural institutions, attempts to address the widest audience possible and various communities, including ethnic minorities that are not used to visit cultural organisations and a general rethinking of who museums represent and who they want to talk to (Gompertz, 2020).

1.3 A focus on Italy: Black Italia

Since this dissertation aims at analysing the roles that ethnic minorities play inside some Italian cultural institutions, a focus on the Italian context is necessary. On the one hand, we are going to examine the importance that colonialism and its aftermath had in shaping the Italian culture. On the other hand, we would like to analyse the Black Lives Matter protests that took place in Italian squares in the summer of 2020, their peculiarities vis-à-vis the United States protests and the consequences they had on the perception that common people have of matters like racism, discrimination and inclusion.

The colonial experience is an episode of the Italian history that is still little known and discussed by public opinion. It is a story made up of wars of conquest, massacres, oppressions and racism that has always been scarcely talked about and often in apologetic terms. The consequence is that when we think about colonial empires we tend to think of the United Kingdom and France or other European colonial empires forgetting that Italy, as well, between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, aspired to become a colonial empire.

Italian colonialism began in Africa in the 19th century with the purchase of the Assab Bay on the Red Sea in 1869 and the annexation of the Massawa port in Eritrea in 1886. The goal of the Italian colonial project was the conquest of the entire Horn of Africa. In 1887, the Italian Prime Minister Agostino Depretis began the Eritrean War, but the conquest was stopped after the Italian defeat in the Dogali Battle. In 1889 Prime Minister Francesco Crispi signed the Treaty of Wuchale with the Eritrean Emperor, according to which Italy obtained the territory around Massawa and Eritrea became an Italian protectorate. The relations between the Reign of Italy and the Emperor of Ethiopia worsened until they finally broke out with the First Italo-Ethiopian War that started in 1895. After the Italian ruinous defeat on March 1896 in the battle of Adwa, the peace of Addis Ababa was signed and Italy renounced to its expansionist ambitions in Abyssinia.

A second wave of colonial conquests started at the turn of the 20th century, fuelled by a general desire of revenge for the humiliations suffered in Ethiopia and by the nostalgia for the Roman Empire. In this atmosphere Libya, an ex-Roman colony, appeared to be the right area to be conquered and annexed to the Italian Reign. Between 1911 and 1912, Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti, after a series of agreements with France and Great Britain which reaffirmed their respective spheres of influence in North Africa, declared

war to the Ottoman Empire, of which Libya was part. Turkey surrendered in 1912 and signed the peace of Lausanne. Italy occupied Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Dodecanese Islands giving life to the colony of Italian Libya.

In 1915, during the First World War, the Allies promised Italy that if it had taken the field with them it would have obtained some territories in exchange. However, after the end of the war, with the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, Italy received less than it had been promised, namely, the Jubaland, the Aozou Strip and a redefinition of the Libyan borders.

Abyssinia, the present-day Ethiopia, was conquered by Italian troops led by Marshal Pietro Badoglio during the war of 1935-1936. The victory was announced in 1936 by Benito Mussolini, and the King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III, assumed the title of Emperor of Ethiopia. With the annexation of Ethiopia, the Italian possessions in East Africa, namely Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea, were merged under the name of Italian East Africa.

During the Second World War, Italy occupied British Somaliland and other areas but then lost them and all its African colonies in 1943 when the Italian Empire declined definitely. After the end of the Second World War, with the Paris Peace Treaties, Italy was formally deprived of all its colonial possessions (Lablanca, 2002).



Figure 1: The Italian Empire in 1940 (Wikimedia)

At the time of its maximum extension, just before the beginning of the Second World War, the Italian Empire had about twelve million inhabitants and occupied today's Albania, Libya, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia for a total area of four million square kilometres.

Even if the phenomenon of Italian colonialism was more limited geographically and lasted less than the British and the French empires, it had huge repercussions both in Italy and in the colonies and in some other countries not directly involved in the conquests and conflicts. Nonetheless, while the post-colonial debate in other European former empires is quite advanced, postcolonial studies in Italy is still an underdeveloped field and studded with myths and legends. Only recently, more or less starting from the 1980s, Italian and foreign scholars began to devote their attention to the Italian colonial enterprise.

The main reason for the neglect of the Italian colonial past, according to the historian Angelo Del Boca (2003, p. 18):

Is the fact that the ruling class refused to initiate a serious, organical, broad, and definitive debate on the phenomenon of colonialism. This debate would have shed light on the positive and negative aspects of the colonial period, the values to be preserved and the myths and legends to be packed away in the attic. [...] The post-war governments not only eluded their obligations to clarity but actively impeded the emergence of truth [...] silencing the many mistakes and crimes committed during the wars of conquest.

In fact, after the end of the Second World War, colonialist lobbies prevented access to the national colonial archives trying to hide the atrocities committed in the ex-colonies and providing an “almost hagiographic picture of the Italian campaigns in Africa” (Palumbo, 2003, p. 3). All this obstructionism made the decolonisation of the Italian colonial historiography a slow and complicated process and the memory of the colonial past weak even though there are indelible traces in our archives, libraries and in the toponymy of our cities.

The weakness of the historical memory, the rhetoric and the romanticisation of the Italian colonial discourse helped fostering a benign representation of what Italian colonisers did in Africa and a denial of their atrocities and violences. Historians proved that the myth of “*Italiani brava gente*” (Italians as colonisers who rather than profiting from the colonial exploitation, unlike other European nations, built hospitals and streets bringing

civilisation to the colonies) and the idea that Italian colonialism was more human and tolerant, do not reflect the reality. The emphasis on the success in the civilising mission and on the improvement of the living conditions of the native populations proved to be fake and a self-created myth. On the contrary, the subjected populations paid a very high price in terms of loss of lives and of their own cultural and national identities; entire parts of the population were decimated and physically eliminated; banned chemical weapons were used against civilians; lethal concentration camps were built; the practice of “madamato”⁶ was allowed and it was a common practice; and all those culpable for these terrible actions have gone unpunished or even obtained honours from republican Italy.

Once the decolonisation process has come to an end and all the former colonies are made independent, what remains of Italian colonialism? The inheritance of colonialism is present in our territory and in our culture but it is still somehow invisible because we are not sufficiently aware for recognising these signs. There are many material traces of the colonial past, like monuments, buildings, street names, that are still visible in the public space both in Italy and in the former colonies. To make only one example, in Rome an entire area exists, known as Quartiere Africano, named after the territories that Italians conquered during the colonial period; there is the Cinema Impero built in 1938 along the same lines as the Cinema Impero in Asmara to celebrate the Italian empire, there are busts of high-ranking soldiers involved in the conquests of Africa (Pietro Toselli, Giuseppe Galliani, Antonio Baldissera) and there are streets called after battles, leading figures and places of the colonial period (via dell’Amba Aradam, via Giuseppe Vigoni, piazza dei Cinquecento)⁷.

⁶ The term “madamato” indicates the relationship of a conjugal nature (concubinage) between Italian and indigenous women during the Italian colonial domination in Africa (Treccani, n. d.). This relationship often consisted in the sexual exploitation and abuse of African women and children perpetrated by Italian colonisers.

⁷ More examples of colonial traces in the toponymy of our cities can be found on the website PostcolonialItaly (<https://postcolonialitaly.com/>). The project *Mapping Colonial Heritage*, as one can read on the website, “is a collaborative project that falls into the field of digital public history. The project was launched in December 2018 in Florence by PhD researchers Markus Wurzer (University of Graz) and Daphné Budasz (European University Institute) and it aims at capturing and documenting material traces that are visible in the public space and, thus, stimulating a public debate on Italy’s silenced colonial history”. There are many other interesting examples of how activists are trying to decolonise the toponymy of our cities. We cite here only two cases: the first one is *Decolonize your eyes*, a public urban event that took place in Padova (<https://www.roots-routes.org/decolonize-your-eyes-padova-pratiche-visuali-di-decolonizzazione-della-citta-di-annalisa-frisina-mackda-ghebremariam-tesfau-e-salvatore-frisina/>), the other one is *Viva Menilicchi!*, a walk along the street of Palermo in search of the colonial traces (<https://www.roots-routes.org/viva-menilicchi-di-wu-ming-2/>).

This is a peculiar aspect because normally in the wake of regime changes most countries choose iconoclasm and destroy the effigies of the past. Italy, instead, chooses a nostalgic and celebrating gesture and built new monuments in honour of the Italian colonisers forgetting the violent past and remembering its protagonists⁸.

Another relevant consequence of the colonial era is the problem of the relations with former subjected populations which considered Italy as their mother country. What happened to the Eritreans and Libyans who had been loyal to our country but then unpopular in their own countries? How to deal with the thousands of mestizos, sons and daughters of Italian soldiers, traders and workers and African women who struggled for years trying to find their identity?

Colonialism is a difficult memory from which the violent and racist sides have been erased in order to move into the realm of the exotic and of the “*posto al sole*” (“a place in the sun”). The active and selective amnesia and the construction of mythologised imaginaries are a dangerous strategy to deal with this kind of difficult memories (Grechi, 2021). In the historical moment in which we are living Italian citizens have to come to terms with an always increasing number of people coming from ex-colonies and some issues will become relevant once again: how to consider them? How to “include”⁹ them? How to let them feel represented? As Palumbo maintains: “it is only by developing a full understanding of the historical conjunctions in which Italian colonial culture was produced and perpetuated that we may hope to decolonise national identity successfully” (Palumbo, 2003, p. 12) and, we add, come into contact with people belonging to other ethnic minority groups.

This encounter between Italians and ethnic minorities occurred centuries ago and it has intensified with colonisation, but it is still complicated and not free from conflict. Following the recent waves of immigration from Africa and the Middle East, the

⁸ A striking example is Rodolfo Graziani, an Italian military officer who played a fundamental role in the conquests of Libya and Ethiopia and who employed harsh repressive measures such as the use of chemical weapons and of concentration camps. Instead of condemning Graziani for the atrocities he committed, in 2012, the mayor of Affile financed with public funds the building of a monument in memory of Graziani raising violent criticism from left-wing parties.

⁹ The process of inclusion is not an easy one and the term itself can be ambiguous. The effort to include minorities within a workplace, an educational context or public life in general must not end with their simple involvement, but it must materialise in a real encounter and cultural exchange. Inclusion has to match with an actual participation, otherwise we risk to enter the domain of tokenism that is the symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups in order to give the impression of social inclusiveness and diversity deflecting accusations of discrimination.

problems of inclusivity and racism became urgent and the debate about the position occupied by people belonging to ethnic minority groups in our country and society has become necessary. Moreover, the killing of George Floyd and the advent of the Black Lives Matter movement in Italy have shaken things and have given a boost to these matters.

In the first days of June 2020, shortly after Floyd's death and the beginning of the protests in the United States, in more than twenty Italian cities, from Bolzano to Palermo, thousands of people have taken to the streets and started to protest to show solidarity with North Americans. Voices against racism demanding equal rights have long existed, but were clouded by a general desire to portray Italy as a white country in which racism does not exist. In summer 2020, for the first time in Italian history, thousands of citizens went out to demonstrate against racism which until then didn't seem to be considered as an Italian issue, but as something far from our lives.

At first glance, the fact that Italians finally felt the need to mobilise in favour of equal rights and inclusivity is undeniably positive. The experience of Black Lives Matter in Italy showed that there are citizens, mostly youngsters, committed to create a more equal and diverse society. Moreover, the visibility and the attention gained by the movement helped to revitalise struggles such as the demand for a reform of Italian citizenship law. However, once the enthusiasm of the moment ended, many Afro-Italian people who took part in the protests started to ask themselves some questions: which type of racism people were protesting against? Which black lives mattered in Italy? Has anything changed? Which is the focus of black Italian struggles? The enthusiasm gave way to doubts (Hawthorne & Pesarini, 2020).

Black Lives Matter protests in Italy were organised in solidarity with the United States protests and with the people killed by the police for racist reasons, but, when black Italian people died because of poor working conditions¹⁰ or have been killed because of their ethnicity, nobody organised such big and powerful demonstrations in defence of civil rights. This is because for white people in Italy it is easier to point the finger at the United States and to talk about *their* racism and discrimination than to reflect on the endemic racism of our own country. Italian systemic racism has its origins in colonialism and,

¹⁰ According to a research made by the NGO Medici con l'Africa Cuamm, more than 1500 migrants died between 2014 and 2019 in the agricultural fields in the south of Italy due to the terrible conditions in which they work and live (Nadotti, 2019).

more recently, in immigration and the difficulty in dealing with the colonial past caused the widespread idea that Italians are not racists: actually, even when we admit that racism exists in Italy we refer to an individual and episodic type of racism, not to a structural attitude. The absence of systematically collected data and information about racist episodes on the Italian territory is one of the causes of the poor commitment by institutions and society to opposing racism. According to the Italian sociologist Angelica Pesarini (2020, my translation):

It is easier to sympathize, to show empathy, to shed tears, to grant the benefit of the doubt to a black man killed thousands of miles rather than to a black man in Italy. Because the bodies like those of Soumaila Sacko, Idy Diene, Samb Modou and Diop Mor, just to name a few, are racialized by the hegemonic white gaze like some of the “many blacks” asylum seekers, migrants coming from Africa or “illegal migrants”.

It is easier to think of blackness in Italy as an external and transitory condition that does not pose any problems and that, therefore, racism in Italy does not exist, it exists only in the United States. The Black Lives Matter experience highlighted the inadequacy of a white leftist antiracism in Italy that sometimes rejects concepts like “white privilege” and “race” considered to be American issues. It is true that Italy and the United States have different histories of race, but such concepts are essential in order to dismantle structural racism in both countries (Hawthorne & Pesarini, 2020).

Pesarini also wondered if it is possible that the protests in Italy did not start because of the death of George Floyd per se but on the wake of the passion and the fervour of the American demonstrations. Had we not seen thousands of people marching together to express their rage, perhaps the protests in Italy would have been different and less participated. Pesarini (Ivi, my translation) concludes saying that “it is precisely the performative dimension of the Italian protests, and the lack of awareness of one’s privilege and positioning that have made these days, for me and many other racialised people, even more difficult”. And in this performative dimension, it must be noted that social media played a fundamental role, firstly diffusing the video of George Floyd’s killing and then the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter and #BlackTuesday asking people to publish a black picture on their social profiles. Additionally, Oiza Queens Day Obasuyi (2020) maintains that this sudden activism and the attention for the systemic racism in the

United States derives more from a matter of trend than from a real fight and that Italian anti-racism is a “performative anti-racism” (p. 132, my translation).

To conclude, we should ask ourselves what has changed and what has not one year after the Italian Black Lives Matter protests. Generally, the attention towards the central issues of the BLM movement, such as the rights of Italians without citizenship, the repression of migrants and asylum seekers, the fight against racism, have gradually waned and have not been heard. Journalists Francesca Moretti and Angelo Boccato have wondered if the great participation in last year’s demonstrations might have been a result of the lockdown, as a minority black Italian people were mostly affected by the tough situation and if it was a fight generated by the specific historical time we were living and not by a genuine sentiment of social justice. Surely, thanks to the Black Lives Matter movement there is an increasing curiosity towards the phenomenon of racism and this is a fundamental starting point for future claims (Moretti, 2021), but the reasons are far from clear and homogeneous.

Chapter 2. Ethnic minorities and the art system

2.1 Inequalities and marginalisation: statistics and state of the art

After having analysed the general context, we can move forward and consider the relation between ethnic minorities and the global art system. Initially, we will describe the position of ethnic minorities in relation to the art world, the roles they play, the place they occupy, the attention they receive, how they are represented.

First of all, we need to define the terms “ethnic minorities” and “art system/art world”. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, ethnic minorities are “people who belong to an ethnic group that is relatively small part of the population” (Merriam Webster, n. d.). With the word “art system” or “art world”, instead, we intend the ensemble of people cooperating in order to produce, commission, present, communicate, preserve, buy, sell and consume artworks. As described by the sociologist Howard Becker, the art world is “the network of people whose cooperative activity, organised via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce the kind of art works that art world is noted for” (Becker, 1982, p. X).

In light of this, in this section we will consider ethnic minorities in the art world as producers (artists), consumers (visitors, collectors) and distributors (curators, museum workers, art dealers, patrons) of fine arts. We will take into consideration the whole art system in order to have a more comprehensive global point of view, with a focus on the United States and the United Kingdom. At the end of the chapter we will consider the Italian situation with its peculiarities and problems.

Our analysis of the place occupied by ethnic minorities inside the art system is mainly based on statistics and testimonies. Unfortunately, there are not data offering a complete view of the roles and positions occupied by ethnic minorities in the art world. However, if we analyse and compare some statistics about specific topics (museum staff demography, presence of people belonging to ethnic minorities among the museum visitors, artists belonging to ethnic minority groups in the collections, etc.) we can draw some conclusions. The only satisfactory statistics we were able to find are about the art system in the United States and the United Kingdom. In other European countries and, in

Italy in particular, we still lack this kind of analyses. Therefore, we decided to handle the Italian case later on, once we have provided a general overview.

Firstly, we want to consider non-white artists and their positioning inside the United States art system and in particular, their presence inside museums, art galleries, private collections and on the art market.

Diversity efforts inside museums usually involve programs and people rather than collections. However, in recent years, many museums in the United States made the achievement of diversity in their permanent collections a priority. The goal is to remediate the historical underrepresentation of female and black artists. However, as it has been demonstrated by the report *Diversity of artists in major U.S. museums*¹¹, published in 2019, North American museums still have a long way to go in diversifying their collections because they are still far from reflecting the society diversity. As a matter of fact, 85.4% of artists exhibited in U.S. major museums are white and 87.4% are men. More precisely, with respect to ethnicity, the pool is 85.4% white, 9.0% Asian, 2.8% Hispanic/Latinx, 1.2% Black/African American, and 1.5% other ethnicities. To have more meaningful information the authors of the report restricted their attention to artist records with geographic origin in North America and birth year in 1945 or later. In this subset 91.7% are white, 3.9% Black/African American, 1.0% Hispanic/Latinx, 0.6% Asian, and 2.9% other ethnicities. The four largest groups represented across the selected museums in terms of gender and ethnicity are white men (75.7%), white women (10.8%), Asian men (7.5%), and Hispanic Latinx men (2.6%). The least represented group in U.S. museums are black women. The researchers also found that 44% of artists represented in the 18 museum collections come from Europe, while 44.6% are from North America (Topaz et al., 2019).

The New York-based artist and data journalist Mona Chalabi offered her own interpretation of the results of the *Diversity of artists in major U.S. museums* report. She tried to help people visualise the actual situation through a series of illustrations of a

¹¹ The study was conducted by a team of mathematicians, statisticians, art historians and professors at Williams College (Chad M. Topaz, Bernhard Klingenberg, Daniel Turek, Brianna Heggeseth, Pamela E. Harris, Julie C. Blackwood, C. Ondine Chavoya, Steven Nelson and Kevin M. Murphy) and it was published online in 2019. The authors of the report conducted the first large-scale study of artist diversity in museums. By scraping the public online catalogues of 18 major U.S. museums, deploying a sample of 10.000 artist records comprising over 9000 unique artists to crowdsourcing, and analysing 45.000 responses, they quantified artist genders, ethnicities, geographic origins, and birth decades.

museum hall populated with human figures indexed by gender and ethnicity (Bishara, 2019).



Figure 2: Mona Chalabi, Who Are You Here to See? (Hyperallergic)

Another fundamental report that analyses the presence of artists belonging to ethnic minorities inside museum exhibitions is the one compiled by the artist and former curator of the Museum of Modern Art, Howardena Pindell¹². The study considered the period between 1980 and 1987 and demonstrated that most of the museums and galleries in New York City represented only white artists. Pindell in 1987 wrote that “the art world will state that all white exhibitions, year after year, are not a reflection of racism. The lie or denial is cloaked in phrases such as ‘artistic choice’ or ‘artistic quality’ when the pattern reveals a different intent” (Pindell, 1987).

However, more than thirty years have passed since Pindell’s report was written and in 2017, using her survey as a model, a curatorial intern at the MCA, Maral Gaeni, compiled a more up-to-date study, analysing the 2016 exhibitions of three New York museums (Metropolitan Museum of Art, MoMA, Brooklyn Museum). The findings of this study are that 84% of the solo exhibitions at the Met in 2016 were dedicated to white artists (the Met’s program for 1980-1986, according to Pindell, indicates that 82% of the exhibitions focused on European artists); 59% of solo shows at the MoMA were for white

¹² Howardena Pindell is an American artist, curator and professor. She is born in Philadelphia in 1943 and studied painting at Boston University and Yale University. Between 1967 and 1979, she worked in the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art of New York. In 1972 Pindell co-founded the A.I.R. Gallery, the first artist-directed gallery for female artists in the U.S. She then began teaching at the State University of New York. Pindell’s work as an artist is often political and it addresses the intersectionality between racism, feminism, violence, slavery and exploitation.

artists (in 1980-1986 only 0.82% of the exhibitions held at the MoMA included artists of colour); 91% of the artists exhibited in group shows in 2016 at the MoMA and 99% at the Met were white (Gaeeni, 2017). The comparison of the two surveys, written respectively in 1987 and 2016, demonstrates that the situation has not changed much.

According to Artnet, in 2018 the number of solo and thematic exhibitions focusing on the work of African American artists grew from thirty-eight in 2016 to sixty-three. However, Artnet examined thirty museums in the United States and they dedicated only 7.7% of their exhibitions to the work of African American artists (the Studio Museum in Harlem alone account for 2.7%) (Halperin & Burns, 2018).

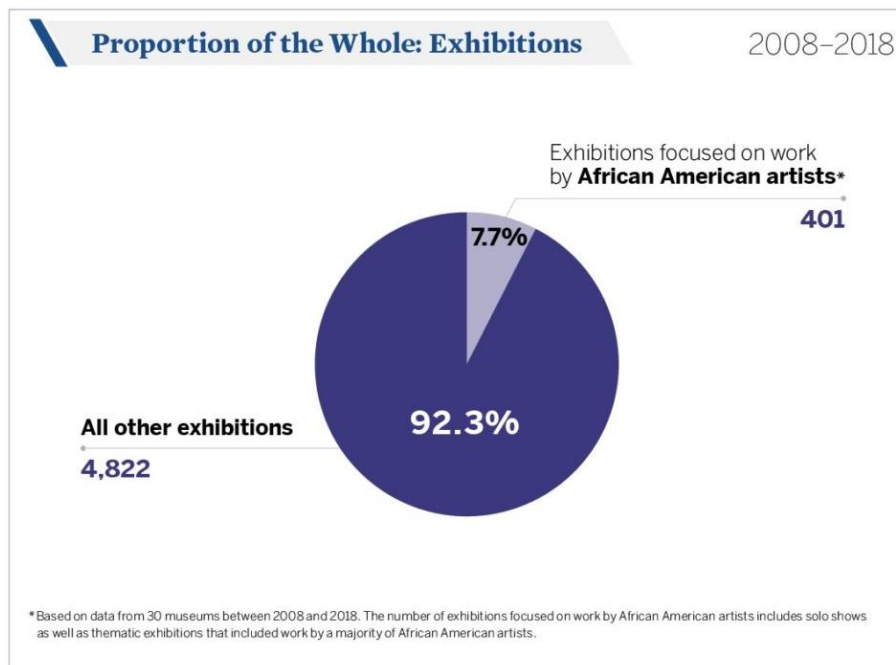


Figure 3: Exhibitions held in thirty selected museums between 2008 and 2018 (Artnet)

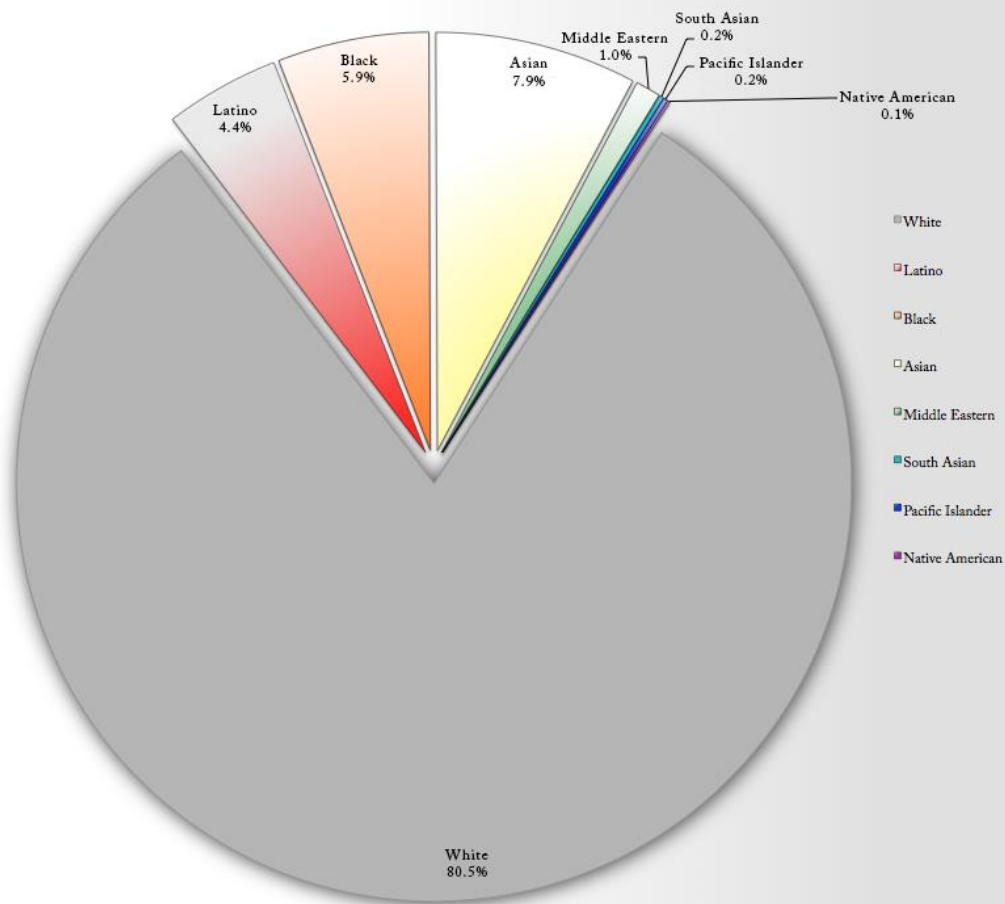
These data suggest that, despite recent efforts, artworks by artists belonging to ethnic minorities continue to have a marginal place inside United States museums. Larger museums put all their efforts on a small number of artists¹³ (Halperin & Burns, 2018) and do not focus on minorities. According to Kellie Jones, a black curator at the Jamaica Arts Center in Queens, “the big museums here don’t do a lot of reaching out, which is why I

¹³ In the past decade almost a quarter of the exhibitions organised in the thirty museums examined by Artnet focused on the same ten artists.

often see things they don't. [...] Big museums have their own cliques and networks” (Failing, 2021) and without museums acquiring, sustaining and exhibiting these artists, progress will be slow.

The situation does not change much if we consider diversity among the artists present in commercial art galleries. A research conducted by CUNY’s Guttman College in 2016 showed that of 1300 artists represented by New York City top 45 art galleries, 80.5% are white, 8.8% are black, 1.2% are Latinos (Neuendorf, 2017).

All Artists by Race*
2016 – 2017



* Artists were not interviewed for this data. Race determination here is not necessarily reflective of how the artist self identifies. When available, we looked at indicators used by publications (artist’s writings, gallery statements, and press), but in the absence of this, their race was recorded based on how they were perceived by the reviewing researcher.

Figure 4: Artists by race in New York City major art galleries in 2016 (*Artnet*)

According to Patricia Failing (2021), when asked about the low representation of minority artists New York galleries' owners often provide two kinds of responses. The first is the one provided by Pierre Levai, director of the Marlborough Gallery, who said that to talk about the racial identity of the artists is "a racist question. [...] The quality of the work is what concerns us" (Ibidem). Another typical response is the one given by the gallerist Ronald Feldman: "the fact I've come to face is that as a white American male, my background hasn't given me the tools to penetrate certain artistic worlds. I'd like to have those tools, but I'm not certain how to get them" (Ibidem). In recent years many minority art dealers opened their own galleries to promote and exhibit minority artists and help them becoming more visible. A growing proportion of the clientele of these galleries consists of young black people.

Another aspect of the art system that needs to be considered is the art market. In the last few years, the market of ethnic minorities artists has grown reaching some record prices such as the \$110.5 million spent by the Japanese entrepreneur Yusaku Maezawa for the azure-and-black untitled skull painting of Jean-Michel Basquiat from 1982. However, according to a joint research by Artnet and In Other Words, analysing the African American art market, the story is different. Around \$2.2 billion has been spent on works by African American artists at auction in the period between 2008 and 2018, that is 1.2% of the global auction market (\$180 billion total). If we exclude the sales of Basquiat's artworks¹⁴ the total sale is \$460.8 million, a very low portion of the total.

The perception that collectors are investing more and more on African American artists derives from the high-profile sales of works by blue-chip artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and James Marshall that reach record prices. A more detailed analysis of the data reveals an unbalanced market that is much smaller in both value and volume than headlines suggest. According to Artnet, auction sales of work by Basquiat between 2008 and 2018 account for 1.7% billion of the \$2.2 billion total, that is 77%.

¹⁴ The fortune of Jean-Michel Basquiat, in respect to other African-American artists, is due to a combination of talent, compelling biography and limited supply. Basquiat's personal story transformed him in a sort of myth. He was a young African American artist from Brooklyn who started his artistic career by spraying painting graffiti in Lower Manhattan under the pseudonym of SAMO. He then became friend with young artists such as Keith Haring, Andy Warhol and Madonna and start to experiment other artistic media becoming an established artist in the New York scene. He died at the age of twenty-seven of a heroin overdose in 1988.

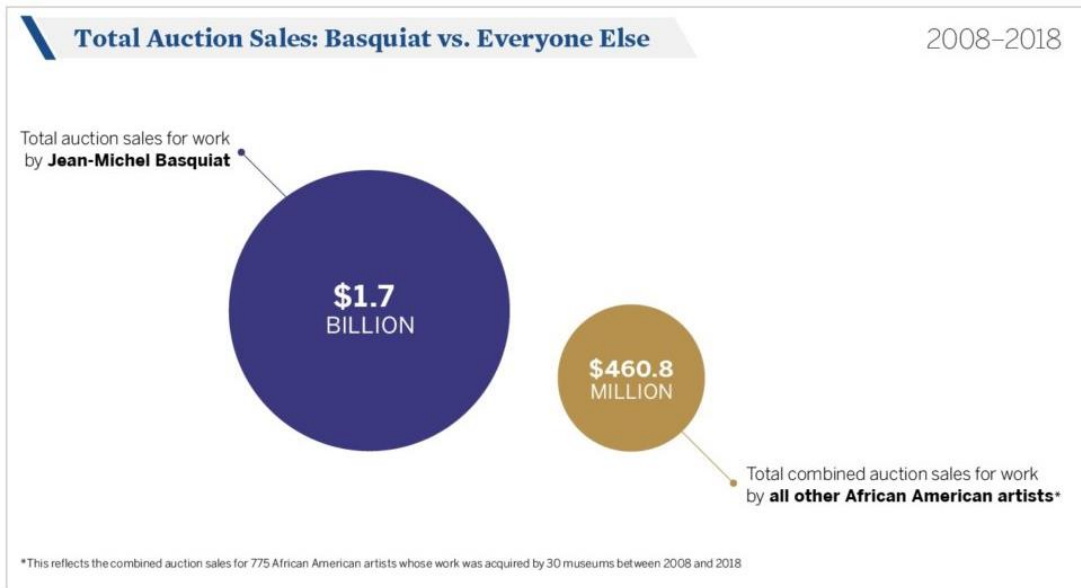


Figure 5: Total auction sales: Basquiat vs. other African American artists between 2008 and 2018 (*Artnet*)

Moreover, even excluding Basquiat, the market is consolidated around five artists: Mark Bradford, Glenn Ligon, Kerry James Marshall, Julie Mehretu and David Hammons. The combined auction sales of these artists account for \$297 million, meaning 64%, of the \$460.8 million total (Halperin & Burns, 2018).

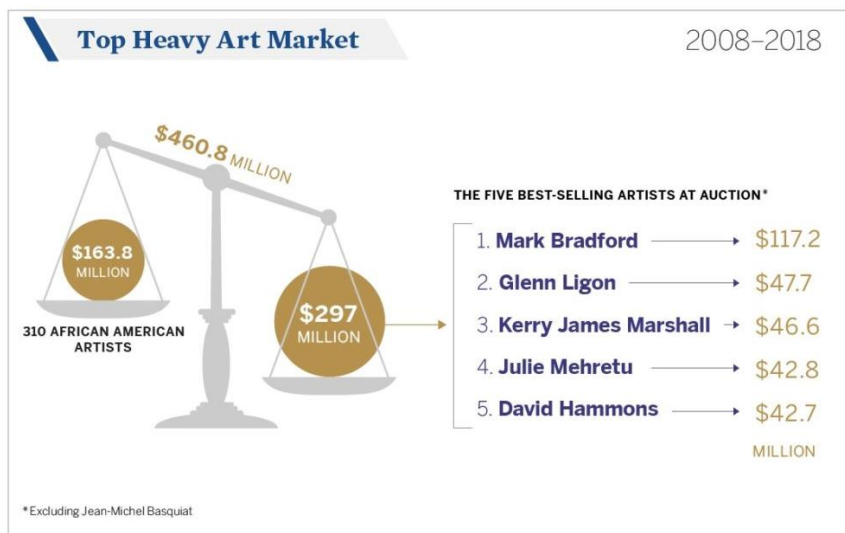


Figure 6: Top heavy African American art market between 2008 and 2018 (*Artnet*)

In light of this, we can conclude that, despite recent efforts, artworks by African American artists continue to be sidelined within the global art market. According to Halperin and Burns (*Ibidem*):

The perception of progress is buoyed by a handful of important exhibitions, a very gently increasing number of acquisitions, and a smattering of headline auction prices. These, however, belie the extent to which entrenched systems of power and influence contribute to institutional racism that impedes significant structural change.

After having analysed the role of non-white artists inside the art system, we will now consider art museum staff and its diversity. A seminal research in this field is *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museums Staff Demographic Survey* compiled in 2015 (Westermann & Schonfel) and 2019 (Westermann, Sweeney & Schonfel). The Andrew W. Foundation is a not-for profit corporation formed in 1969 that seeks “to build just communities enriched by meaning and empowered by critical thinking, where ideas and imagination can thrive” (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, n. d.). The Foundation has worked hard for years to open up United States museums as workplaces to people from historically underrepresented minorities with the aim of diversifying cultural organisations and making them more representative of the growing diversity of the American population. In 2014, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation proposed partnering with the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) and American Alliance of Museums (AAM) to conduct a demographic survey of art museum staff and boards. The survey was designed and implemented by Ithaka A + R with the assistance of an advisory committee of AAMD staff and member museum leaders.

The 2015 survey showed that 76% of AAMD staff is non-Hispanic white, and 24% belongs to ethnic minorities. However, there is a significant difference in demographic diversity across the types of museum jobs. Non-Hispanic white people dominate the jobs associated with the intellectual and educational mission of museums. As a matter of fact, in this employment category they occupy the 84% of the total (6% are Asian, 4% are Black, 3% are Hispanic, and 3% are of different races). The 2015 survey seemed discouraging, because it “found that the museum staff was about ten percentage points more racially and ethnically homogenous than the U.S. population” (Westermann &

Schonfel, 2015). However, it offers a baseline data against which future progress can be tracked.

In 2018, the Mellon Foundation commissioned another survey, to which 332 art museums responded (in 2015 only 181 institutions submitted their data and 136 institutions did it both in 2015 and 2018 thus allowing a direct comparison after four years). Demographic and employment information on more than 30,000 museum employees were recorded. The 2018 survey showed that “while the U.S. population is growing increasingly diverse, the positions that are most directly responsible for presenting, interpreting, and caring for art objects from all the world’s cultures over time are not yet reflecting that diversity” (Westermann, Sweeney & Schonfel, 2019). However, the survey demonstrated that museum staff have become more racially and ethnically diverse as compared to 2015. In 2018, 72% of museum staff was non-Hispanic white while 28% was of different ethnicity.

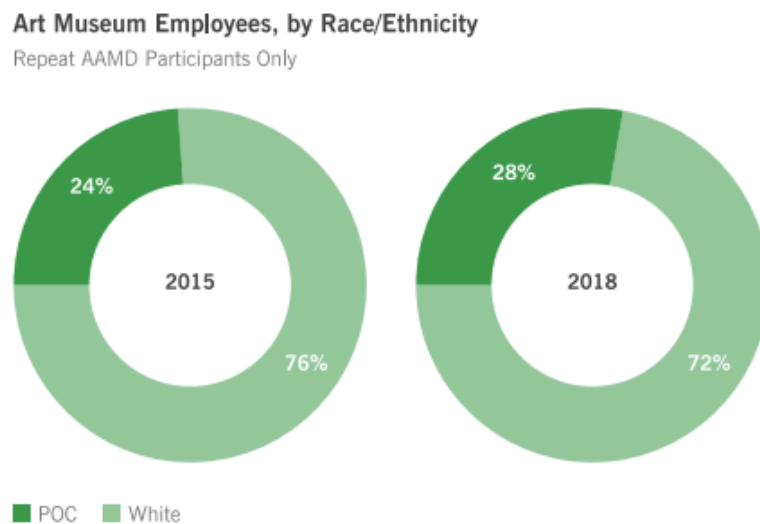


Figure 7: Art museum employees, by race/ethnicity in 2015 and 2018 (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation)

Art Museum Employees, by Race/Ethnicity

Repeat AAMD Participants Only

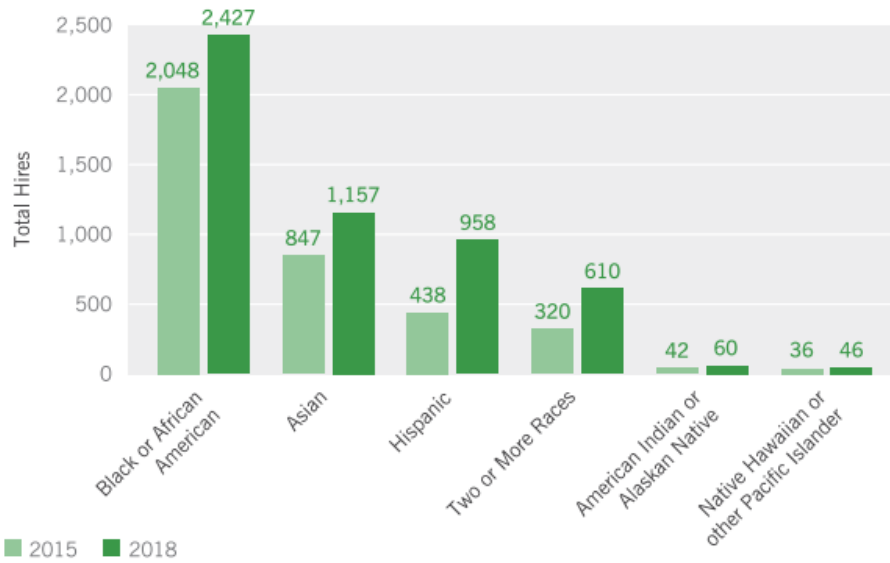


Figure 8: Art museum employees, by race/ethnicity in 2015 and 2018 (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation)

The growth in the number of employees for each ethnicity category from 2015 to 2018 can also be observed in conservation, curatorial, education and museum managerial positions. As a matter of fact, employees in these positions are five percentage points more diverse in 2018 as compared to 2015.

FIG.7

Intellectual Leadership Positions, by Race/Ethnicity

Repeat AAMD Participants Only

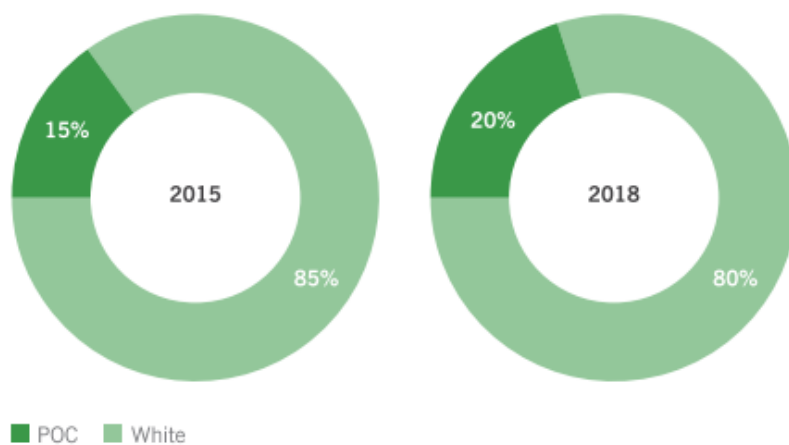


Figure 9: Intellectual leadership positions, by race/ethnicity (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation)

If we consider the intersection between gender and ethnicity, we obtain that white women comprise 56% of museum leadership positions, white men 33%, women of ethnic minorities 7%, men of ethnic minorities 4%. These data are interesting because they are different from other sectors in which we usually find more men than women in leadership positions. As far as it concerns the museum sector, instead, women play a crucial role and they are starting to reach apical positions. If we consider the Italian museum sector, for example, data are encouraging. According to Federica Galloni (Galloni in Larcán, 2020, my translation), General Director of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape at the Ministry of Culture:

The female representation directs about the 37% of the 43 Sovraintendenze of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape on the national territory. In museums, then, about the 70% are headed by women. [...] Finally, for the central offices of the Ministry, the percentage rises even to about the 60%: as a matter of fact, women lead 7 of the 12 general directorates.

In light of the reports compiled by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, we can conclude that museums are making an effort to diversify their staff at the different levels, but there is still a long way to go to reach diversity levels equivalent to those of society of the United States, especially as far as it concerns skilled jobs. As a matter of fact, most of the people from minority backgrounds working in museums are in security and service positions while white and female staff prevails in the job categories associated with the intellectual and educational mission.

Other protagonists of the art system worthy of consideration are the art collectors. We were not able to find precise statistics about the number of collectors active in the United States belonging to ethnic minorities, but we found some interesting testimonies about their growing role. Nicola Vassell, curator of the art collection of the music producer Kasseem Dean (aka Swizz Beatz) notes that “there is a growing class of wealthy black patrons who look like the artists and are operating in the sphere of power on the buying side” (Halperin & Burns, 2018). Furthermore, gallerist Ernestine Brown reports that “there’s been a definite growth in the number of black collectors. The key is education, exposure, and, above all, perseverance” (Failing, 2021). These young African American collectors are having a key role in supporting the artists from their own communities and the galleries that sell their artworks. They feel honour-bound to protect black artists and

to preserve their culture, excluded from the art spaces for too long. It is interesting to note here that the African American art collector Pamela Joyner explained that the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent protests have had an impact on art institutions (Dodson, 2021):

There was already a trend in the museum arena to pay more attention to art history as a whole, including Black voices. Now there’s an amplification and an acceleration. I find the environment more open than it’s ever been, in my experience, to new ideas around promoting Black voices, so people are looking more broadly at acquisitions, programming, and exhibitions.

Another crucial actor inside the art world are the visitors and we want to focus on them here. According to a study on 40,000 U.S. museum visitors in 2010 (Reach Advisors, 2010), most of them, namely 91%, are white and only 9% of the core museum visitors are part of the minority population. The situation improves a bit if we consider only some kinds of museums. Science and children’s museum, for example, have a more diversified public, and 34% of the visitors identify themselves as members of minority groups. In history museum visitors identifying as minorities are 12%, while in art museums they are 16%. The chart below illustrates the widening gap between the United States population and the “core museum visitors” (Ibidem).

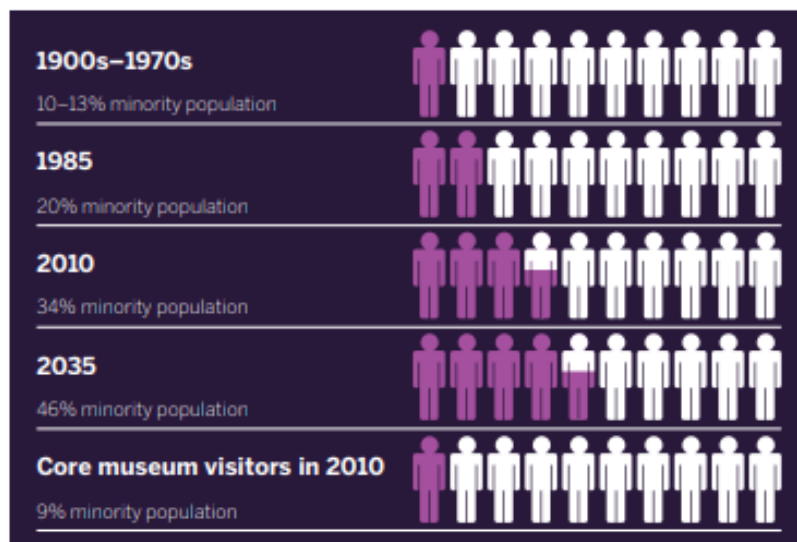


Figure 10: Analysis of census data (Reach Advisors)

Another seminal study in this respect is the *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (SPPA) conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the U.S. Census Bureau starting from 1982. These surveys were published in 1982, 1985, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2012 and 2017. As all the other SPPA, even the latest one took into consideration also the race and ethnicity of the surveyed people. The outcome of the survey is that higher rates of white people, namely 26.3%, than black (14,9%), Hispanic (14,3%) or Asian people (18,5%) attend art exhibitions or visit museums. The “Other” category includes all race and ethnicity compositions other than non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic Asian and Hispanic.

Race/ethnicity	Live music performance ¹	Fair or festival that featured crafts, visual arts, or performing artists	Live play or musical ¹	Art exhibit, such as paintings, sculpture, pottery, photography, or digital art	Live dance performance ¹	Other kind of live performance ²	Event featuring a poet or writer ³
White	47.8	46.2	28.1	26.3	15.8	11.3	6.6
Black	30.2	27.7	16.0	14.9	14.2	10.1	6.8
Hispanic	29.8	29.5	14.0	14.3	13.9	7.9	2.1
Asian	32.9	27.8	20.7	18.5	15.9	9.1	5.2
Other	45.5	47.9	21.1	33.3	13.7	13.6	13.4

¹ Includes professional, community, or student musicians/performers.

² Examples of 'other kind of live performance' include storytelling, standup or improv comedy, puppetry, or a circus performance.

³ Examples of an 'event featuring a poet or writer' include book signings, readings, or poetry slams.

Figure 11: Percentage of U.S. adults who attended artistic, creative, and cultural activities during the last 12 months, by race/ethnicity and activity type: 2017 (National Endowment for the Arts)

These statistics demonstrate that also with regards to the diversity and inclusion of the visitors there is still a lot of work to be done before reaching a fair level of participation. These differences in racial and ethnic patterns in museum attendance are due to many factors. Surely there are some historically-grounded cultural barriers that make museums feel intimidating and exclusionary to many people. The lack of specialised knowledge and of high levels of education make the understanding and appreciation of the artworks more difficult, especially in art museums, while the absence of museum-going habits stops many potential visitors from visiting cultural institutions (Farrell & Medvedeva, 2010). However, many museums are developing strategies to engage with more diverse audiences and in the next part of this chapter we will discuss some of them.

All the surveys analysed so far refer to the United States. Now we will focus on a report on equality and diversity in the National Portfolio Organisations¹⁵ (NPOs) in the United Kingdom. The *Equality, Diversity and Creative Case* report of 2019-2020 has been compiled by the Arts Council England in 2020 and analyses diversity in its broadest sense, focusing on ethnicity, disability, gender and sexual orientation. Among all the report data, we will consider the ones about the NPOs workforce diversity and about NPOs audience's diversity. The sample analysed includes 737 organisations.

According to the *Equality, Diversity and Creative Case* report, the total percentage of the NPOs black, Asian and ethnically diverse workforce is 13% in 2019/2020, showing an improvement from the 11% in 2018/2019. According to the Office of National Statistics the percentage of the working age population in England belonging to ethnic minorities is 17%, therefore there is not yet a full reflection of society's diversity.

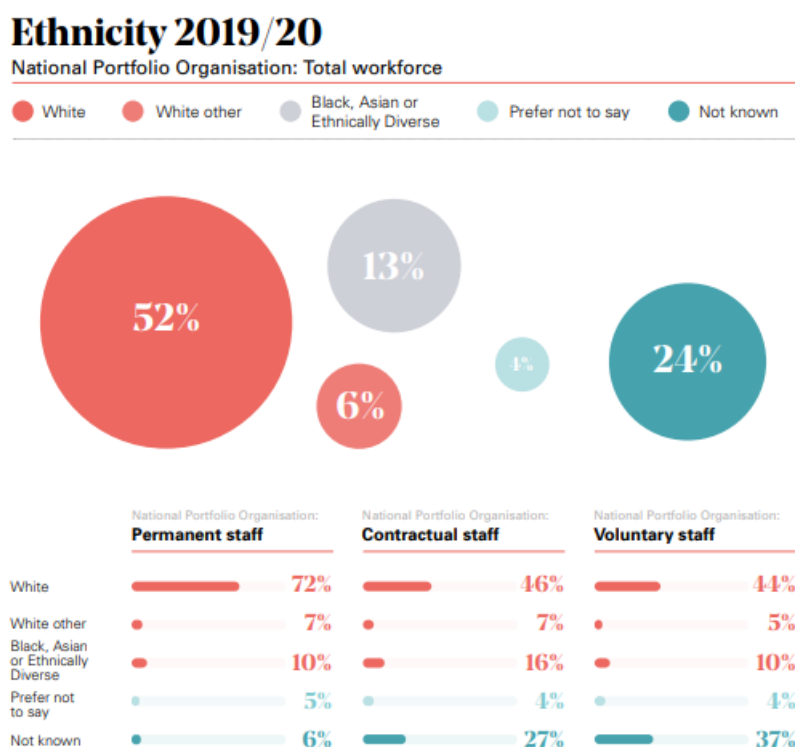


Figure 12: Ethnicity of NPOs total workforce in 2019/2020 (Arts Council England)

¹⁵ UK-based culture and arts organisations receiving funds from Arts Council England.

Ethnicity representation by job level

Ethnicity of staff at different job levels, National Portfolio Organisations: All paid staff (2019-20)

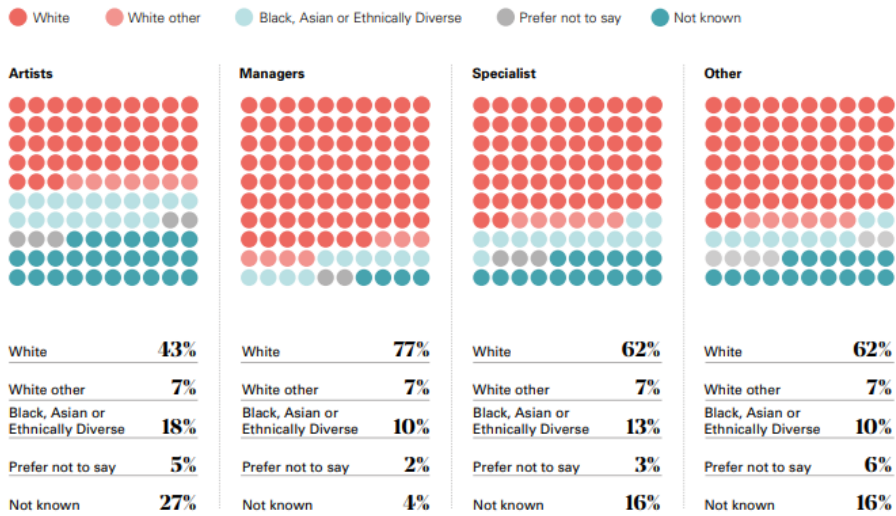


Figure 13: Ethnicity representation by job level in NPOs paid staff in 2019/2020 (Arts Council England)

Since the previous report, the representation of black, Asian and ethnically diverse people increased to 17% in the leadership and governance positions. 11% of the chiefs executive, 12% of the artistic directors and 11% of the chairs are black, Asian or ethnically diverse.

NPO headline leadership data 2019/20

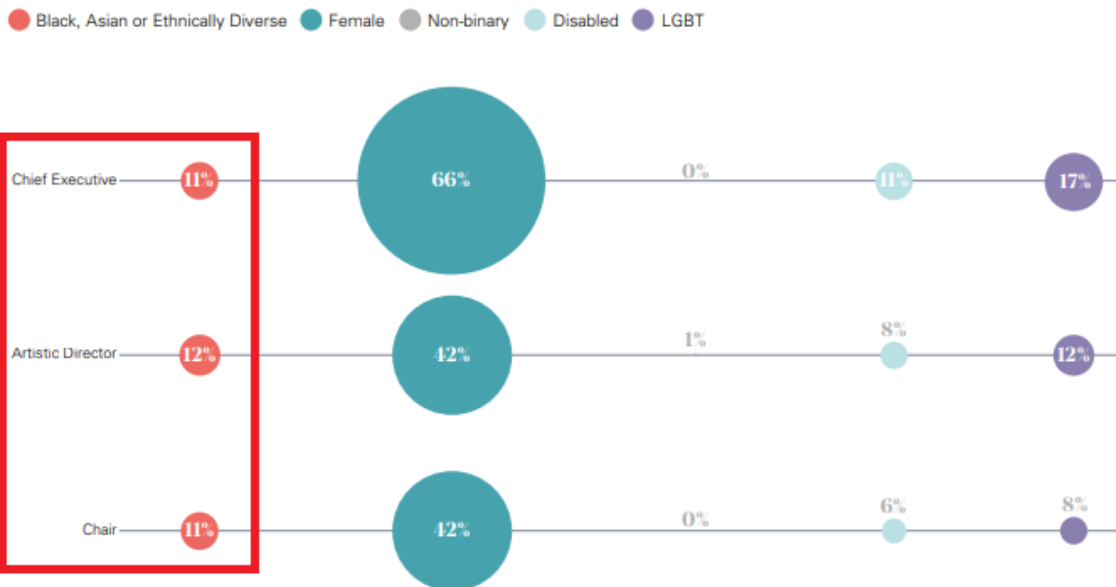


Figure 14: NPO headline leadership data 2019/2020 (Arts Council England)

As to the National Portfolio Organisations boards, black, Asian or ethnically diverse people represent the 17%, versus the 66% of white people.

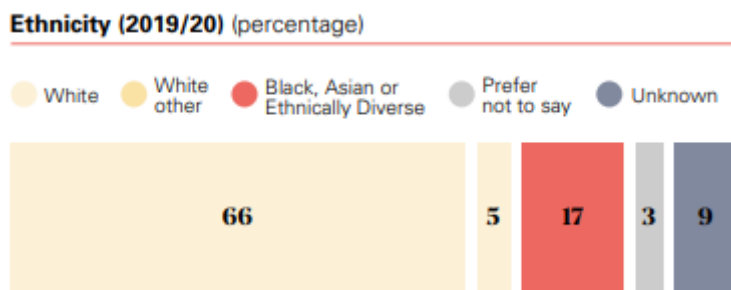


Figure 15: NPOs boards ethnicity in 2019/2020 (Arts Council England)

These levels of diversity are not the same in the whole territory considered. As a matter of fact, London has the highest percentage of black, Asian and ethnically diverse staff (19% of the total workforce) while the South West and the North areas have the smallest percentage, namely 7%.

Of the overall NPOs audiences surveyed, 89% described their ethnicity as “white”, 3% as “mixed”, 4% as “Asian or Asian British”, 2% as “black or black British”, 1% as “other”.

From the data of this report we can conclude that, like in the United States, arts organisations in the United Kingdom are reaching higher levels of diversity in their workforce, leadership and audience, but ethnic minorities are still having a minor role in respect to white people.

2.2 Toward diversification, inclusion and decolonisation

The statistics analysed so far show that ethnic minorities still occupy a marginal position within the art world and, in particular, inside museums. In recent years, however, a process of decolonisation, diversification and inclusion started at different levels and in various fields, such as public spaces, archives and museums. According to a special

edition of the survey *Culture Track*¹⁶ compiled in 2021, 42% of the respondents think that arts or culture organisations should address system racial injustices more than other social issues such as income inequality and wealth gap (31%), climate change and natural disaster (31%), the political division in the United States (28%), food insecurity and hunger (24%), the Covid-19 pandemic (14%) or the opioid/heroin crisis (11%) (LaPlaca Cohen, Slover Linett & Yancey Consulting). This demonstrates that there is a growing attention and sensibility towards the topic of racism and, as a consequence, towards inclusivity and equality. In this dissertation, we decided to focus on museums and on the strategies they are implementing in order to become more diverse, to include ethnic minorities and to decolonise their collections.

In 2019, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) offered a new definition of museum stating that:

Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.

This definition is a fundamental starting point for our analysis because it stresses the importance of museums being inclusive, polyphonic, participatory and safeguarding diverse memories working with and for diverse communities. Contemporary museums must reflect and address contemporary society that is becoming more and more diverse, therefore, they must become more inclusive and diverse too. To do so, they have to work with three main actors: the staff members, the actual and potential audience and the collections.

¹⁶ The *Culture & Community in a Time of Transformation: A Special Edition of Culture Track* is a national online survey of behaviours, attitudes, motivations and barriers to cultural participation of the audience. It has been conducted by LaPlaca Cohen, a cultural marketing firm based in New York City, in collaboration with Slover Linet Audience Research between 2020 and 2021. The survey is based on a sample of 78.000 respondents representative of the general population of the United States.

The first actor we want to focus on is the staff. The first step to take in order to be more inclusive and to connect with communities in meaningful ways consists in addressing the marginalisation of minorities in museums staff and boards. This must happen at all the different job levels, from the security staff, to the curatorial staff, to the executive leadership, to the boards. Diversification of the staff must come along with an upgrade of the working conditions and pay of the people employed by the museum, as suggested by the activist collective *Decolonize this place*¹⁷ in the list of actions that museums should undertake in order to decolonise themselves.

In order to increase diversity of the staff and the board, museums should start internally by creating a welcoming climate for the staff members. They can follow some recommendations and directions listed by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (Sweeney & Schonfeld, 2018). The first recommendation is to “broaden job qualifications with a spirit of inclusion” (p. 6). Once a museum broadens its job requirements, the candidates with different backgrounds will be enticed to apply for the position bringing new and valuable skills to the institutions. The second suggestion is to “develop strong mentoring programs” (Ibidem) in order to create opportunities for historically excluded people to come into contact with museum professionals and mentors and build connections with them. Another advice provided by the Foundation is to “pay all interns” (p. 7) because the practice of hiring interns without paying them excludes those that are unable to work for free, which usually belong to minority groups. The Foundation then recommends to “diversify the board” (p. 8) to expand beyond usual and familiar networks including normally excluded people. Finally, the Foundation suggests to “cultivate alignment across the organisation” (p. 9) creating opportunities to listen to employees on issues of access, equity, diversity and inclusion and to share ideas across the different sectors of the institution.

Having a diverse and inclusive staff is an incentive for the museum to attract a wider and more diverse audience. Non-white visitors are more likely to visit cultural institutions in which there are non-white people among the artists whose works are exhibited in the museum, the staff and the other audience members. This happens because visitors feel better understood and represented and they can trust the institution and collaborate with

¹⁷ *Decolonize this place* is an activist collective based in New York City organising public events focusing on issues like Black liberation, free Palestine, global wage workers and decolonisation. In the so-called *Decolonization Commission*, they offer a seven-points strategy that museums should follow in order to decolonise themselves.

it creating a sense of belonging and long-lasting relationship. It often occurred that museums lost their credibility because they organised exhibitions or events about topics such as Black Art without involving any party directly concerned. It is the case, for example, of the Brooklyn Museum which hired a white curator for the African Art department prompting opposition from activists¹⁸ (Neuendorf, 2018). Moreover, having workers with different ethnic backgrounds enriches the museum with different perspectives, narratives and points of view that can be reflected in the activities of the museum itself.

Another fundamental aspect regarding museum staff is its training and education. Before deciding to work with the public, museum workers should consider their own system and ask themselves if it supports equity and inclusion. First of all, museum professionals should be aware of “the multiple strands of traditional white, male, Western, Judeo-Christian heteronormative ideals that permeate the institutional fabric of most museums” (Callihan et al., 2017, p.18). To develop this awareness every organisation has to listen to the needs of the audience, interrogate staff experiences regarding issues of inequality and injustice within the institution and examine the historical legacies of colonialism, racism and white privilege that still resonate in museums, in their collections and in their policies. Only after having gained full awareness of the legacies that characterise Western museums, professionals can recognise their impact on ethnic minorities and pass to the action by practicing an active listening, challenging paradigms and enacting systemic change. Therefore, the education and training of the staff of museums is crucial for having more diverse and inclusive institutions. The feminist sociologist François Vergès (Comune di Milano – InComune, 2021), when asked about what we can do in order to decolonise our museums, highlighted the importance of education and co-education as the starting point to recognise the legacies of the museums and to create a more inclusive

¹⁸ In 2018, the Brooklyn Museum decided to hire a white woman, Kristn Windmuller-Luna, as the consulting curator for the African collection. Dr. Windmuller-Luna was appointed because of her brilliant curriculum vitae and independently from her being a white woman. However, this decision has generated a debate about the representation in cultural institutions asking whether it would be better to hire black experts for such positions. The opposition against this decision was prompted by the activist group *Decolonize This Place* which released an open letter titled “Your curatorial crisis is an opportunity to decolonize” demanding the creation of a *Decolonization Commission* to help the museum “account for its own role in the histories of colonialism and white supremacy” (Decolonize Brooklyn Museum, 2018). Along with the Brooklyn Museum board, many scholars and curators took the side of Windmuller-Luna. Among them the Nigerian-American curator Okwui Enwezor who stated that “the criticism around her appointment can be described as arbitrary at best, and chilling at worst. There is no place in the field of African art for such a reductive view of art scholarship according to which qualified and dedicated scholars like Kristen should be disqualified by her being white, and a woman. African art as a discipline deserves better”. (Enwezor in Salam, 2018)

institution. In the interviews conducted by Maria Valchou and Ana Carvalho to museum professionals for the book *The inclusion of migrants and refugees: the role of cultural organisations* (2017), the issue of education appears frequently. David Fleming, director of the National Museums Liverpool, for example, highlighted the “need to train staff in unconscious bias and in understanding the diversity (historic and contemporary) of this region” (p. 53) in order to be more inclusive and to better represent the ethnic variety of the society.

The second actor we want to consider is the audience. According to the previously mentioned ICOM definition, museums should be participatory, in the sense that they should build strong and trusting relationships with traditional and new audiences seeking to ensure community engagement (ICOM, 2019). Museums should mirror contemporary society and become a contact zone made of equal relations in which all the subjects are called to participate in the process of creation, interpretation and negotiation of the cultural heritage. These relationships can be built through equality of access, conversation, collaborative practices, co-creation and participation.

According to Richard Sandell (1998), museums can be both agents of social exclusion and of social inclusion. The risk is that:

The exclusion of minority groups from the political, economic and social dimensions of society is reflected in the museum which fails to tell the stories of those groups and denies them access to its services through mechanisms of exclusion (non-representation within collections and displays, selective promotional targeting, admission charges, etc.). (Sandell, 1998, p. 410).

Therefore, museums should work in order to re-integrate the categories excluded. Richard Sandell identifies three main dimensions on which the museum can work in order to create an inclusive and shared place: representation, participation and access. The first dimension is the representation, by which Sandell intends “the extent to which an individual’s cultural heritage is represented within the mainstream cultural arena” (Ibidem). The second category is participation, that refers to the “opportunities an individual has to participate in the process of cultural production” (Ibidem) The last dimension identified by Sandell is the one concerning the access that are “the opportunities to enjoy and appreciate cultural services” (Ibidem).

There are many aspects that museums need to consider and many strategies they can implement in order to include a more diverse audience. We will now focus on some of them.

Firstly, museums should reach a full equality of access by removing all the barriers that risk limiting the visitors' approach to cultural products and services. These barriers can be of economic nature, such as the price of the entrance ticket; physical, such as the impossibility to easily reach the museum; and cultural. Cultural barriers are the most difficult to identify and remove. Museums should use communication means that address everybody, represent cultures other than the Western one, contextualise the artworks and eliminate the perception of the museum as an exclusive place. A museum that has tried to be more inclusive, by eliminating economic barriers, is the Museo Egizio di Torino. In 2016, the museum launched the campaign "*Fortunato chi parla arabo*" inviting Arab citizens to visit the museum with two tickets for the price of one. This economic incentive was aimed at bringing Turin citizens of Arab origin closer to their cultural heritage preserved inside the Museo Egizio (Penna, 2016). However, it is not automatic that a discount on the ticket price leads to the audience widening. Often the economic incentive is not enough to entice people to visit museums, especially in the case of ethnic minority communities that are not used to spend time in these places and perceive them as stranger.

Then, cultural institutions should activate a conversation with ethnic minorities. They should listen to the minority groups, respect and value their points of view and question their own perspectives. This intercultural dialogue is necessary to have more equal museums and to let all the visitors feel part of the institution. This is particularly true in the case of museums or exhibitions that show artworks or artefacts produced by non-Western people. In this case, white curators should prioritise the voices of the people who produced those artworks and artefacts. As a matter of fact, inclusion regards the whole production-consumption process, and, in order to have an effective policy, ethnic minorities should be included at the production, conservation and consumption levels. The Museo delle Culture (MUDEC) in Milan, since its opening in 2014, made an effort in dialoguing with communities living in the city. On the website of the museum it is written that one of the fundamental aims of the museum is "the promotion of an active dialogue with all the involved communities" (MUDEC, n. d.). To cite just one example, in occasion of the exhibition "*Stories in motion – Italians in Lima, Peruvians in Milan*" the MUDEC

started a dialogue with Peruvians living in Milano in order to enrich the exhibition with different points of view and direct testimonies.

Museums should also dialogue with activists and take into consideration their claims. According to the curator Olga Viso (2018): “if museums want to continue to have a place, they must stop seeing activists as antagonists. They must position themselves as learning centers, not impenetrable centers of self-validating authority”. In the last decade, many collectives, engaged in the struggle against social inequalities and in the defence of the rights of ethnic minorities, have railed against cultural institutions. Museums should question their position and listen to the requests and claims of the activists. This is what happened in the Summer of 2020, when the American Natural History Museum announced that, following the protests of a group of activists, the statue of Theodore Roosevelt on horseback flanked by an indigenous man and a black man would have been removed. In the wave of the Black Lives Matter protests and of the toppling of racists monuments worldwide, the American Natural History Museum decided to listen to the activists and to accommodate their request (Bishara, 2020). However, the Museum then decided to move the statue in the forthcoming Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in North Dakota and this decision has raised again the protests of the activists (Di Liscia, 2021).

However, conversation is not enough. The audience *wants* and *has* the right to collaborate with the museum staff in order to co-create something. Therefore, museums should implement some collaborative practices with ethnic minority groups, asking them, for example, to co-curate an exhibition or to organise guided tours offering a different interpretation and point of view on things. People belonging to minority groups become active protagonists inside the cultural institutions and they participate not only as simple visitors but also as creators and story-tellers. An example of the active participation of ethnic minorities inside museums is the project “*Amir – Accoglienza, musei, inclusione e relazione*” launched in 2018 in central Italy by a network of local museums with the aim of proposing cultural mediation activities conducted by foreign citizens. It currently involves thirty-two mediators and ten museums, collections and churches between Florence and Fiesole.

The third actor that needs to be considered when analysing the process of diversification, inclusion and decolonisation of the museum is the collection. Historically, museums were

founded on collections of material objects destined to celebrate the wealth of a nation. Nowadays these collections are steeped in colonial legacies and inequalities, therefore, it is necessary to rethink the traditional understating of museum collections and to “shift from the centrality of the collection to the centrality of the narration” (Grechi, 2021, p. 178, my translation).

Museums should “cease being a ‘curated’ place, a space rendered anaesthetised, immune and impermeable to the story of traumas and wounds” (De Angelis, et. al., 2014, p. 11) and become dynamic and critical spaces. Museums should shift from being “the place where objects (artworks, books, archaeological remains) are stored and exposed as sacred historical signifiers that embody Memory to the museum as a space that generates narratives, events, experiences, new memories” (p. 18). They should rethink the role they play inside contemporary society starting from the collection itself.

This process of rethinking starts with the interpretation of the collections offered by the museums. Interpretation, according to the authors of the MASS Action Toolkit, is “a narrative and a method of communicating to and with visitors; it might be written, spoken or visual. [...] Interpretation also conveys an institutional voice. It can be the lens through which an institution views its particular subject matter. [...] Interpretation encompasses the myriad ways that museums share their stories with visitors and staff” (Callihan et al., 2017, p. 89). Museums should abandon the traditional interpretation which is a “didactic, top-down model in which the institution’s voice is privileged and set apart as all-knowing” (p. 90) and should stop positioning themselves “as sacred keepers of knowledge that filter out stories deemed unimportant by the dominant culture (which is often white and male)” (Ibidem). In order to be more inclusive and diverse, museums should offer an interpretation that is “both anti-oppressive and liberation-minded. Museum interpretation can and should move in the direction of being dialogic (conversational), de-centered (all people given equal consideration), and open source (sharing authority with audiences)” (Ibidem). Therefore, museum professionals “should think creatively about bringing into their interpretation the voices of those who have been marginalized or trivialized” (p. 91) and should avoid every kind of paternalism. The interpretation offered by museums should not be univocal but a postcolonial constellation (Enwezor, 2003) that “gives voice to multiple and heterogeneous contexts that differ from each other” (De Angelis, et. al., 2014, p.2). Therefore, the museum can be considered as

a “laboratory of counter-narratives” according to Giulia Grechi (2021, p. 19, my translation).

An effective example of how a collection can be perceived in a completely different way after a process of re-interpretation and re-signification is offered by the renowned exhibition project called *Mining the museum* and conceived by the African American artist Fred Wilson for the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore¹⁹. In 1992, the artist was asked by the Maryland Historical Society of Baltimore to present the collection of the museum in a new and critical light creating an exhibition in the Contemporary Museum of Baltimore. Wilson started by speaking “with everybody in the museum, from the maintenance people through the executive director, and find out what they feel about the institution, what they feel about the city they’re in, and what the relationship between the two” (Karp & Wilson, 1996, p. 182). Then he “looked at every object in the Historical Society collection” (Ibidem). He wanted the objects to speak to him and finally he “called the installation *Mining the Museum* because it could mean “mining” as in goldmine, digging up something, or it could mean blowing up something, or it could mean making it mine” (Ibidem). Significantly, Wilson decided to “mine” the white male gaze according to which the collection was created and exhibited until then. “He did so simply by assembling the museum’s collection in a new and surprising way, and by deploying various satirical techniques, first and foremost irony” (Beautiful Trouble). He reshuffled the collection in a strategic way in order to communicate opposite messages. Providing some suggestive and just apparently casual juxtapositions of objects, Wilson showed the visitors the persistence of racial hierarchies and injustices and he made visible what was invisible. “In so doing Wilson also served as an ethnographer of African-American communities lost, repressed or otherwise displaced in such institutions” (Foster, 1996, p. 191). An example of the installations featured in the exhibition is the vitrine labelled “*Metalwork 1793-1880*” that displayed a slave’s iron shackles alongside ornate silver goblets and decanters. By juxtaposing these objects, Wilson made clear the link between the two metal works: one is made thanks to the subjugation enforced by the other.

¹⁹ The Maryland Center for History and Culture, formerly Maryland Historical Society, was founded in 1844 to collect and preserve the remnants of the state history through research, writing and publications. It houses a collection of 7 million books, documents, manuscripts, and photographs, and 350.000 objects (<https://www.mdhistory.org/>).



Figure 16: Fred Wilson, Mining the Museum. installation view (Metro Pictures).

Along with the interpretation, there is the representation of ethnic minorities and of their heritage provided by cultural institutions. In trying to be inclusive and diverse, museums should pay attention to the level and quality of the representation they offer of minority groups. Do these minorities feel well represented inside museums? Is this representation fair? Or is it contaminated by a Western and dominant gaze? Is there the risk that representation expires in tokenism? These are fundamental questions that cultural institutions should consider when talking about representation of ethnic minorities.

According to Grechi (2021, p. 109, my translation), when confronted with a museum collection, which is never neutral because each collection has its own complex history (Di Lella, Gravano, Grechi, 2020), people should ask themselves several questions:

Why are these objects in our collections? How to penetrate and bring out the ambiguities implied in the transparency of many contemporary museum narratives? Who are the subjects authorised to speak, and which ones are in danger of remaining objects of the discourse? How can we avoid the paternalistic gesture of “giving voice” to a subject that remains an “other”, and instead of triggering a reciprocity of gaze at the cost of radically questioning the museum narrative? How can one question the monological authority of the museum, reverse or subvert the point of view in a radical way, bring out the suppressed or obscured points of view?

Addressing these questions helps to avoid carrying on the inequalities and social injustices on which many of the Western museums are based.

The other aspect we want to consider here is the actual and practical decolonisation of a museum collection. Decolonisation, as we have previously mentioned, is a long process evolving in different phases and “it requires a huge effort, because you have to unlearn in order to learn, you have to develop a form of curiosity which always asks how, who, why and for whom” (Vergès, 2018, p. 123, my translation).

The process of decolonisation of a collection starts with a research effort in order to shed light on the origins of the artworks and artefacts present in the collection. Museum professionals should understand why these objects are in a museum, where do they come from, how they have been acquired. The cultural heritage preserved in Western museums, especially in ethnographic ones, is full of spectral traces of our colonial history and those traces need to be analysed, brought to light and narrated. According to Grechi (2021, p. 104, my translation): “the objects and bodies aestheticised in the ethnographic museum are decontextualised, classified, labelled, translated, exhibited and re-contextualised – in a word cannibalised – by a Europe that needs foundational narratives of its own identity, to act as a universal escape point”. Therefore, in order to decolonise their collections, museums should give account of the processes through which these artworks and artefacts are decontextualised and re-contextualised and of the specific circumstances of production and appropriation (Grechi, 2011). This first phase towards decolonisation of museum collections can be summarised with the word *transparency*.

Once this process of shedding light on the origins of the collection is done, museums have to rethink the way in which they present the objects to the public. The exhibition modes, as we have seen with *Mining the museum*, contribute to the transmission of a specific message. Western colonisers committed an act of violence when they took away these objects and now museums have to avoid the replication of this violence in their display. They can do it by coming into contact with the diasporic communities and by considering different viewpoints and languages. They should do an effort to avoid colonial terminology, to dismantle the rhetoric of victory highlighting a different history and sometimes choose not to exhibit the most sensitive materials.

Another aspect worth of consideration is that sometimes, when addressing issues such as colonialism, slavery or migration, museums are confronted with an absence of material

objects. Therefore, the sociologist Françoise Vergès developed the notion of the *museum without objects* that is a museum “not founded on a collection of objects, where the objects would be one element among others, where the absence of material objects through which to visualise the lives of the oppressed, the migrants, the marginal, would be confronted” (Vergès, 2014, p. 25). In this case the best strategy to employ is “not seek to fill up a void, to compensate for the absence, but to work from the absence, embracing it fully, for we understood that this absence was paradoxically affirming a presence” (Ibidem). This idea of a *museum without object* is in line with what Claire Bishop maintains in her seminal book *Radical Museology*, especially in regard to the archive. Bishop (2013, p. 5) states that today “a more radical model of the museum is taking shape: more experimental, less architecturally determined, and offering a more politicized engagement with our historical moment”. A radical museum, according to Bishop, is the one which uses its archive in a creative way integrating it into the displays and making the museum a “partisan historical narrator” (p. 35).

However, these strategies are not always enough to reach a complete decolonisation of the collections of the museums. In the last decades a strong debate arose around the possible restitution of the cultural heritage stolen during the colonial campaigns. According to art historian Bénédicte Savoy, this debate started in the '70s, but then suffered a slowdown in the '80s, when museums refused to collaborate in this process of restitution. This issue came back in the headlines in November 2017, when the French president Emmanuel Macron made a speech in Burkina Faso calling for the restitution of African artworks and artefacts held in France (Savoy, 2020). Then, president Macron commissioned to the Senegalese writer Felwine Sarr and the French art historian Bénédicte Savoy the *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle* published in 2018. The aim of the report was to analyse the history and state of conservation of publicly owned French collections of African artefacts obtained through illicit or disputed acquisitions. After having pointed out the necessity for European countries to take the responsibility of their own colonial past, the report also offered some conceptual and practical guidelines to be followed to return these objects.

According to Sarr and Savoy, the restitution of illicitly acquired or stolen African/Asian/South American artefacts to their original countries is the only possible solution. Achille Mbembe agreed with them and commenting on the report said that without restitution there will be no justice:

This is not about punishing France or asking it to repent, but about repairing its relationship with Africa, for the purposes of what we have to call “the good of the world”. Restitution is a determining element in restoring and reinventing it. It is in this sense that the principle of restitution is, for me, an indisputable principle which makes it possible to combine law and justice. (Mbembe in Truong, 2018, my translation)

Only through restitution can communities reappropriate these objects both physically and symbolically without forgetting that they have been looted and spent decades in Western museums. As a matter of fact, restitution is not merely an economic compensation but, as it is written in the report (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, pp. 39-40):

A demand for truth. Compensation here consists in offering to repair the relation. The restitution of objects (having become the nodes of a relation), also implies a fair and just historiographic work and a new relational ethics; by operating a symbolic redistribution repairing the ties and renewing them around reinvented relational modalities that are qualitatively improved.

One of the main objection raised to the report and to the restitution proposal advanced in it is that African countries do not have institutions and structures able to preserve and exhibit the returned artefacts in the same way that France does. Sarr and Savoy replied to this objection by demonstrating that in Africa there is plenty of cultural institutions suitable for the conservation and exhibition of those objects and that what we define as material culture in Africa is not necessarily exhibited inside museums but is often preserved in schools, universities, artistic and religious centres. In Western countries instead, these objects are often preserved in the archives and never exhibited publicly at the museums. Moreover, the two scholars remind us something we tend to forget, that is to say the right of young African generations to own, study and manage their own cultural heritage.

If restitution is considered by some an extreme gesture, there are some other actions that Western countries can undertake in order to start this process of decolonisation. They can, for example, put in place a policy of temporary restitutions or of long term loans to ensure a circulation of these artefacts through exchanges and partnerships. Or, they can start by offering an economic compensation and reparation, even though often this action is not enough and risks to be a way to perpetrate a form of domination-subjugation. The

Metropolitan Museum, for example, has just announced that in addition to returning three looted objects to Nigeria, it agrees to cooperate on loans and exchanges of art with the African country. According to these agreements, the Metropolitan Museum will temporarily lend artworks from its collection for the opening of the Edo Museum of West African Art in Benin City (Villa, 2021).

The publication of the report written by Sarr and Savoy gave a fundamental boost to the debate on restitution. As a matter of fact, in 2020 the French legislature unanimously passed the law that would allow for the return of twenty-seven looted artefacts to Benin and Senegal within five years. In the same year another report was issued in the Netherlands, the *Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections*, urging the unconditional return of looted museum objects to their countries of origin. As a consequence, the Dutch government promised to create a new policy on restitution (Packard, 2020). Germany too agreed to return some of the looted artefacts preserved in its national collections and, in particular, it decided to hand back to Nigeria the contested Benin bronzes (Oltermann, 2021). These are only some examples of the countries and institutions that are starting to consider to work on their collections, understand the origins and the appropriation modes of contested artefacts and eventually return them to the original owners. This is just the beginning of a long process of decolonisation.

2.3 A focus on Italy: research status and initiatives

Since this dissertation focuses on Italy and on its cultural institutions, in this third part we want to analyse the Italian situation. As far as it concerns the statistics about the role that ethnic minorities have inside the Italian art system, we were not able to find reliable surveys as in the case of the United States or the United Kingdom. We contacted many experts and associations (Anna Chiara Cimoli, Simona Bodo, Alessio Menonna, Fondazione ISMU, Fondazione Fitzcarraldo) who work on and study the relations between ethnic minorities and Italian cultural institutions and they all told us that, unfortunately, as far as they know, there are no systemic surveys about the museum attendance of ethnic minority groups or about their roles inside museums. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that, unlike the United States and other countries, the cultural origins of an individual are a variable hardly requested, and therefore recorded, in Italy. While there

are some statistics based on other demographic variables such as gender, age and level of education, about the demographic characteristics of artists/visitors/employees in Italian museums, we still lack data based on the ethnicity, as if it was considered a secondary factor, not worthy of attention.

The only study worthy of citation in this context that we were able to find is the one compiled by Alessio Menonna in 2019 about the relation between migrant people and Italian cultural institutions: *I consumi culturali degli immigrati in Lombardia. Lettura, cinema, teatro, musei e concerti*. This study strays a little from the heart of our analysis that regards ethnic minorities and not migrant people, but, in any case, we found it interesting and worthy of mention. The survey analyses the cultural consumption of migrants aged fourteen or older, living in Lombardia as of 1st of July 2018. According to the report made by Menonna, the percentage of people of migrant origin that never visited a museum in the last twelve months is high, reaching the 80% in the case of “Other Africa”. Accordingly, the percentage of those who visited a museum more than twelve times in a year is very low, as shown by the table below (Menonna, 2019).

	<i>Est Europa UE</i>	<i>Est Europa non UE</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>Nord Africa</i>	<i>Altri Africa</i>	<i>America Latina</i>	<i>Totale</i>
0	62,9	64,1	69,9	66,7	80,0	56,3	66,9
1-3	30,1	27,9	26,9	29,0	17,5	39,6	28,3
4-11	6,6	6,3	2,8	3,6	1,9	3,1	4,0
12+	0,4	1,7	0,4	0,7	0,6	1,0	0,8
Totale	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Figure 17: Frequency distribution with respect to the number of times one has visited museums in the last twelve months among immigrants from countries with strong migratory pressure and living in Lombardia as at the 1st of July 2018 (Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multiethnicità)

These statistics, even if limited and very specific and even if they regard migrants and not ethnic minorities more in general, seem to confirm the trend highlighted in the previously mentioned surveys conducted in the United States and United Kingdom. The ethnic diversity present in the Italian contemporary society is not reflected in the community of people who visit museums, whose works are exhibited inside these spaces or who work there. However, this is an issue that is becoming more and more of topical interest, especially after the Black Lives Matter protests that shed light on racism and on social inequalities in Italy.

As a consequence, museums and cultural associations are starting to develop strategies to include ethnic minorities, diversify their audience and decolonise their collections. They are doing so through different kinds of initiatives: conferences, publications, long and short term projects, partnerships, etc.

The number of citizens of migrant origin involved in projects of ideation and realisation of new visit paths is increasing. The website *Patrimonio e Intercultura* created by the *Fondazione ISMU – Iniziative e Studi sulla Multiethnicità* is a useful collector and promoter of these kinds of projects. It is an online resource dedicated to heritage education in an intercultural key, which promotes the dissemination of good practices in Italy, offers information about training courses and useful aids for research and practice activities, hosts contributions of experts and operators and promotes the cultural participation of ethnic minorities. On the website visitors can find over ninety projects on interculturality realised between 2005 and 2021 by Italian cultural institutions.

We have already mentioned the project “*Amir*” but there are other examples of similar initiatives, such as the important project “*Mediatori Museali*” conceived by the Galleria d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo. It is an exemplary and almost unique case of continuity, progression and institutional change in the Italian context. As a matter of fact, early in the 2000s, the GAMeC began to address the issue of cultural participation of migrants who were not represented at all in the museum audience. In 2007, the museum launched a training program which led to the creation of a permanent group of over thirty mediators of migrant origin. These collaborators were involved in the museum activities and regularly paid. Another example worthy of mention, is the experience of the Pinacoteca di Brera, that, in 2012, launched the project “*Brera: un’altra storia*” and entrusted a group of eight cultural mediators from different parts of the world to create narrated itineraries around the museum collection. This is an interesting case, because we are talking about a museum whose collection includes ancient and modern Italian paintings and not contemporary artworks that decided to involve different voices in a dialogic, participatory and inclusive narration of its heritage.

These are just a few examples of strategies and initiatives implemented by Italian cultural institutions in order to involve a broader range of citizens in their activities. In the next chapter we will analyse in greater detail three museums chosen as case studies.

Chapter 3. Italian case studies

3.1 History and mission of the institutions

After having analysed the levels of marginalisation of ethnic minorities inside the global art system, and after having examined some strategies of diversification, inclusion and decolonisation implemented by cultural institutions around the world, in this third chapter we would like to dwell on the Italian context.

Therefore, in order to better understand which is the role of ethnic minorities inside Italian cultural institutions and to have a better idea of the strategies that these institutions are implementing to become more diverse and inclusive, we decided to analyse three Italian case studies. The choice of these specific museums was dictated by several criteria we decided to follow. First of all, we decided to select three museums of contemporary art because this kind of institution is the one that best reflects the post-colonial and globalised world we live in. Among all the contemporary art museums present in the Italian territory, we selected these three institutions because of their successful efforts in creating an equal and diverse environment in which ethnic minorities can feel welcomed and represented. Therefore, they can be considered virtuous case studies and this is the main reason why we have chosen them. The three museums we selected are different in nature: one is public, one is private and the third is a combination of the two; they are also of different dimensions, internationally known or more local.

These virtuous case studies, each one with its positive and negative aspects, are: the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Bergamo (GAMEC), the Museum of Twenty-first Century Art in Rome (MAXXI) and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin/Guarene.

Before entering the core of the analysis, in this first part, we are going to offer a brief but fundamental description of these three cultural institutions. In particular, we are going to focus on the history of the three museums, on their foundation, venues, collections, and management. Then, we are going to analyse their institutional missions and goals. The aim is to see if the three museums we selected somehow include ethnic minority groups in their policies and in their official objectives and in which terms they do it.

3.1.1 The GAMeC



Figure 18: GAMeC Bergamo (Giulio Boem)

The Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Bergamo was inaugurated in 1991 as an expansion of the near Accademia Carrara. The museum finds place in the former monastery of Santa Maria del Paradiso delle Servite e delle Dimesse founded in 1498. The restoration of the building was entrusted by the Municipality of Bergamo to the Studio Gregotti Associati International in the '90s. At the base of this important intervention there was the need of the Pinacoteca Carrara to find a nearby place suitable to host the increasing number of contemporary artworks that were entering its heritage. Therefore, the GAMeC became a sort of development of the Pinacoteca Carrara, creating an art pole which spans a period of time that goes from the 13th century to the present days.

The collection of the Gallery is composed of about 3000 artworks of different natures, namely paintings, sculptures, engravings, photographs, medals, video installations and films. The works of art date from the beginning of the 20th century to the present days and they are made both by Italian and foreign artists.

The GAMeC and its collection owe their existence to a tradition of patronage and collecting typical of the city of Bergamo. As a matter of fact, the collections, along with some spare artworks of different origins, is made up of three main units donated by known artists and patrons to the museum. The first main unit is the Manzù Collection, a group of artworks made by the Italian sculptor Giacomo Manzù and donated to the gallery by the artist himself in the '80s. The second unit is the Spajani Collection made up of forty paintings of Italian and foreign masters of the 20th century that became part of the heritage of the GAMeC in 1999. The third unit is the Stucchi Collection: twenty paintings of the '50s and '60s made by European artists and given to the museum in 2004. Along with these collections, the Gallery owns works transferred there from the Accademia Carrara collections as well as some artworks acquired by the Associazione per la GAMeC di Bergamo – onlus or donated by artists, collectors and institutions such as the over 450 photographs donated by Lanfranco Colombo or the 200 medals donated by Vittorio Lorioli.

The museum is made up of three floors with ten rooms. Along with the permanent exhibition of the three main collections, the Gallery hosts the so-called Sala Caleidoscopio, in which the artworks are displayed in rotation, applying new viewing concepts on each occasion and creating themed narratives and exhibitions dedicated to individual artists or movements. The rest of the museums is intended to host temporary personal and collective exhibitions by international artists, projects by emerging artists and an intense calendar of activities for a wide and diverse audience.

Since its opening in 1991, the management of the GAMeC was entrusted exclusively to the Municipality of Bergamo. In 1999 the non-profit organisation Associazione per la Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo was constituted and the management formula changed becoming public and private at the same time. Among the main founders of the association there are the Municipality, the companies Tenaris Dalmine and Bonaldi Motori s.p.a. and the bank UBI Banca Popolare di Bergamo. This public-private administration allowed the museum to gain a greater number of resources through donations and financing (Boyer, 2015). Since 2017 at the head of the museum there is the Italian art historian and curator Lorenzo Giusti.

According to the operating conditions established by the Associazione per la Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, the missions of the museum are:

The enhancement, increase and knowledge of the heritage of the Municipality of Bergamo given to the GAMeC; the protection, promotion, organisation and management of activities, initiatives and events that favour the dissemination and enhancement of the heritage of the GAMeC, a centre for the promotion of culture and art, as well as cultural production and pursuit of social solidarity purposes; the acquisition of resources and assets to be allocated to the activities of the GAMeC (Bilancio Consultivo GAMeC, 2017, p.3, my translation).

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is interesting to note that, among the main objectives of the Gallery, the pursuit of social solidarity is clearly enhanced. This is, perhaps, the only mention, in official documents, of the importance of solidarity, inclusivity and diversity. As a matter of fact, there is no specific reference to ethnic minorities and migrants and to their role inside the museum in the website of the museum and in the operating conditions mentioned above. They are not identified as a component of the institutional mission of the GAMeC and the museum has not a department or a staff member specifically dedicated to the pursuit of diversity and inclusivity nor a specific budget for such goals.

However, as we will see in the following pages, the GAMeC is one of the most advanced Italian cultural institutions in matters such as inclusivity, diversity and multiculturalism. As a matter of fact, in the past twenty years, the Gallery has put in place many groundbreaking projects with the aim of involving and including different kinds of audiences that unfortunately are not often directly addressed by cultural institutions. In order to do it, the museum gave birth to some collaborations with different associations and institutions working on the territory such as the Municipality, schools, the Academy of fine arts, jails, immigration centres, etc. and it organised conferences, debates, guided tours and laboratories with different topics that constituted a communication point between the cultural institution, its collection and various categories of citizens. The main aim of these initiatives and collaborations was to conceive the museum as a dynamic point of meeting and collective growth.

This choice of not clearly mentioning inclusivity and diversity in the policy documents but of always taking these issues in consideration nonetheless has been confirmed to us by the head of the Educational Services Giovanna Brambilla Ranise. During a phone call on January 18th 2022, she explained us that it is true that the Gallery has not a written

equality policy in relation to the sensitive issues of sex, gender, disability, race, age, etc. and that they do not have quotas for minority categories, but that they always pay great attention to diversity and equality without falling into tokenism. The museum often submits questionnaires to minority categories in order to understand which aspects they can improve in order to avoid any kind of discrimination. For example, during our call, doctor Brambilla Ranise explained us that they asked to the Bergamo LGBTQ+ community to fill out a survey from which it emerged that they felt included inside the museum and that the only aspect to improve was the distinction male/female in the toilets of the museum. The Gallery thus decided to work on this aspect and a gender neutral toilet was created along with the male and female ones that were kept because of the needs of some religious minorities. This is just one small example of the attention the museum and its staff pay to these sensitive issues with the objective of becoming more equal, inclusive and diverse.

3.1.2 The MAXXI



Figure 19: MAXXI Roma (maxxi.art)

The MAXXI is the National Museum of 21st Century Arts, it is located in Rome and it is one of the most important Italian institutions dedicated to contemporary arts. It was conceived as a cultural campus managed by a Foundation created in 2009 by the Italian Ministry of Culture and headed by the President Giovanna Melandri. The institution houses two museums: the MAXXI Arte, directed by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, and the MAXXI Architettura, directed by Margherita Guccione. The artistic director of the museums is the art critic and curator Hou Hanru.

The MAXXI is located in the Flaminio neighbourhood in Rome in the area of the previous Montello barrack of which the façade and the corpus of the basilica of Santa Croce were maintained. In 1998, the Sovraintendenza ai Beni Culturali announced an international competition for the construction of a new cultural exhibition centre dedicated to contemporary art and architecture in Rome. Among the over 200 applications, the jury selected the winner project in 1999. It was the one designed by the Anglo-Iraqi archi-star Zaha Hadid and it was chosen because of its capacity to integrate with the urban fabric and for its innovative architecture. The MAXXI is conceived as something more than a museum, it is a multifunctional campus integrating different spaces such as the atrium, the galleries, the laboratories, the commercial spaces, the auditorium, etc. The museum opened to the public in 2010.

The MAXXI Architettura is the first national museum of architecture to be established in Italy. The museum has two main aims: historicising the architecture of the 20th century on the one hand, and answering to the questions of present times interpreting the expectations of contemporary society on the other. Therefore, the museum is both historical and contemporary. The MAXXI Architettura collections are divided into the 20th Century Collections, the 21st Century Collections and the Photography Collections. They are curated and managed by the Architecture Archives Centre and the Photography Centre and they comprise all the materials representing the processes of creation: from the design idea to the realisation. These collections derive from acquisitions, donations and commissions by the museum itself. The architecture collections include over 60.000 design drawings and 75.000 photographs, together with models, letters, documents, sculptures, paintings and books. The photography collections, on the other hand, is made up of around 1000 prints realised by over 60 photographers.

The MAXXI Arte, instead, “focuses on the promotion of young art and the valorisation of those we may consider as its masters and movements that were active in the 20th but still dialogue with 21st” (MAXXI, n. d.). Together with the art collection, the MAXXI Arte hosts an interdisciplinary cultural offer including theatre, dance, music, fashion, graphics, film and advertising. The MAXXI Arte assembled its collection over time thanks to purchases, prizes, donations and loans. It is constituted by around 400 artworks witnessing the international contemporary art production with a focus on Italy and on those foreign artists linked to the Italian context.

The MAXXI mission is to promote the current Italian creative expressions deriving from the artistic and cultural expressions of the past. Moreover, as we can read in the website of the museum,

The MAXXI intends not only to be a container of the works of art of our century, but also a place for cultural innovation and the overlapping of languages, a laboratory for artistic experimentation, a machine for the production of aesthetic materials of our time. The MAXXI aims to be a centre of excellence, an interactive hub in which the most diverse forms of expression, productivity and creation may converge, combine and reproduce (MAXXI, n. d.).

The main mean of communication chosen by the museum is art because of its immediacy and universality and because it “contributes to the comprehension of worlds and cultures otherwise foreign and potentially conflictual, favouring the coexistence of differences” (MAXXI, n. d.).

The programmatic line of the MAXXI, therefore, consists in stabilising the museum as an open institution capable of activating a new critical spirit. In order to do so, it deals with issues related to contemporaneity such as migration, ethnic diversity and cultural contaminations. The MAXXI tries to valorise the sharing and the subsequent cultural enrichment between different communities and many artists present in the permanent collection are witnesses of the minority condition and of these cultural exchanges (Trombetta, 2017).

In the policy documents of the museum a general attention to all kinds of public is clearly enhanced as well as the importance of the diversity and equality of the employees. As a matter of fact, in its Ethical Code (2016, my translation), the Foundation commits itself to guarantee “a work environment that values the diversity of employees, in compliance

with the principle of equality, taking care to protect the dignity and freedom of every employee in the workplace” and to avoid any form of discrimination. Despite these virtuous intentions, in these documents there is no specific mention to ethnic minorities and their involvement as employees or visitors.

3.1.3 The Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo



Figure 20: Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Torino (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo)

The Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo is one of the first private foundations opened in Italy, it was created in Turin in 1995 on the initiative of its president Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo who turned her passion for contemporary art into an organised activity. The Foundation is a non-profit organisation and it has its roots in the private collection of Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo that was launched in 1992. The Foundation has two venues: Palazzo Re Rebaudengo in Guarene d’Alba that opened in 1997 and the museum in Turin that opened in 2002. In 2017 the Fundación Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Madrid was created as well (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, n. d.).

The Guarene venue is hosted inside Palazzo Re Rebaudengo, a historical 18th century mansion on the Roero hills in Piemonte. The palace was redesigned as an exhibition space

by the architects Corrado Levi, Alessandra Raso and Alberto Rolla with the aim of preserving the original architecture making it a suitable place for hosting exhibitions. Therefore, the architects created a balanced interaction between traditional elements of the past such as the stucco decorations and the frescoed ceilings and the innovative elements and materials such as concrete, aluminium, iron, glass. Since its opening, the Palazzo Re Rebaudengo has hosted exhibitions produced by the Foundation, together with prize-giving ceremonies, books and films presentations, debates, conferences and teaching workshops. The residential wing of the palace is devoted to accommodate foreign curators working for the Foundation.

The Turin venue, also known as the Center for Contemporary Art, instead, was built from scratch in the San Paolo district, which is the former industrial area of the city and which was formerly abandoned. The building was designed by the architect Claudio Silvestrin and it distinguishes itself for the essentiality and simplicity of the spaces which are conceived to host and exhibit contemporary artworks. As a matter of fact, the structure and dimensions of the building allow to manage all the activities and to create different exhibition itineraries. Since its inauguration in 2002, the Center became the main exhibition venue of the Foundation and an international space for contemporary art where young artists, curators and critics can meet and exchange ideas. Along with the exhibition area, the Center offers a bookshop, a classroom for workshops, an auditorium for projecting films and holding concerts, conferences, congresses and round tables and a cafeteria designed by the artist Rudolf Stingel (Bonami, et. al., 2005).

The Sandretto Re Rebaudengo collection was built over the decades in close collaboration and interaction with the artists. At the beginning, the selection of the artworks to include in the collection followed five main strands: British art, Los Angeles art, Italian art, women's art and photography. Nowadays, the collection is more a constellation of artworks and it reflects the diversity of the contemporary international scenario. As a matter of fact, each work of art tells us something about the time we are living in (Maggi, 2013). The collection is private but it is bounded to the Foundation and often the artworks property of Patrizia Re Rebaudengo are granted on loan and shown inside the Foundation venues. Therefore, the collection and the Foundation maintain a close and active relationship although based on mutual autonomy.

The Foundation, together with an exhibition centre, is also an educational institution offering valued training programs such as the Residency for Young Foreign Curators, a research residency in Italy organised every year with the objective of developing the professional and critical skills of three selected young curators, and Campo, a program for curators launched by the Foundation in 2012 based on a specialistic course and a travelling residency. Moreover, the Foundation organises every year various educational projects and initiatives for schools, teachers, families and adults.

The Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo is also active in the creation of a cooperative network between institutions. It has relations with other artistic institutions, public bodies, banks, local communities, businesses and associations. In 2014, the Foundation had a seminal role in the promotion of a National Committee of Contemporary Art Foundations. In 2008, it founded the Network Foundation of Arts for a Contemporary Europe. Along with these networks, the Foundation is active in supporting major events such as the Biennale di Venezia and Documenta in Kassel. In 2006, the Foundation instituted the prize “*Premio StellaRe*” intended to call attention to the achievements of women in the fields of culture, sciences and economy.

The Foundation can be considered as a hub and an observatory of the international contemporary artistic trends and it has as its main mission the promotion of cultural activities in various fields such as the visual arts, music, theatre, cinema and literature. Another fundamental objective of the Foundation is the development of relationships and contacts with Italian and foreign cultural institutions, with public bodies and figures of international standing. On the website of the Foundation (Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, n. d.), we can read the following words describing the mission of the institution:

Preserving the central role of the artist, as part of a culture of collecting based on sensibility and personal involvement, is a mission spelt out in the Foundation’s statute, and takes the form of support to new generations of artists through the promotion and creation of exhibitions, and the production of works. The second mission of the Foundation centers on the visitor, who is both the target and protagonist of initiatives aimed at spreading and expanding knowledge about contemporary art.

In light of this, we can affirm that the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo is a dynamic cultural institution committed to promoting Italian and foreign young artists and to creating a meeting point where all kinds of visitors can enter into contact with contemporary culture. Although the commitment of the Foundation and efforts to be more diverse and inclusive as possible reaching all segments of the population, there is no explicit mention to ethnic minorities in the policy documents. The Education Department, however, is extremely active and committed to the inclusion of all kinds of audiences (children, young adults, adults, people with disabilities, etc.). The Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation continues to invest in the training and mobility of its educational department operators, so that intercultural projects become daily practice. This happens thanks to the good results obtained with the projects and initiatives put in place so far and thanks to the conception, fully shared by the presidency of the Foundation, of the museum as a space of meeting, exchange, learning, training and growth (Palermo & Togni, 2010). The Foundation also pays attention to the involvement of young professionals with different backgrounds as curators, cultural mediators, educators, etc. However, even in this case there is no specific policy about the involvement of people belonging to ethnic minorities.

3.2 Terminology and methodology

Before proceeding with the analysis of the case studies, it is necessary, for the sake of clarity, to introduce some methodological and terminological matters and to establish some guidelines we are going to follow. First of all, since we are going to talk about the role that ethnic minority groups have inside the three museums we selected, it is fundamental to provide a clear definition of ethnic minority and to linger on the complexities and problems that this contentious term brings in. Furthermore, considering that some Italian cultural institutions talk more about migrants than ethnic minorities, we should focus on the similarities and differences of the two terms and decide which is the most appropriate for our aims. After this focus on terminology, it seems fundamental to offer some insights on the methodology behind researches on ethnic minorities and to present the criteria we decided to follow during our analysis.

The term minority or minority group, according to van Amersfoort (1978), has a huge variety of meanings and contradictory properties and, therefore, it is a difficult concept to

use in scholarly analysis. A useful description of the term is provided by Louis Wirth (1945, p. 348):

A group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination. The existence of a minority in a society implies the existence of a corresponding dominant group enjoying higher social status and greater privileges. Minority status carries with it the exclusion from full participation in life of the society.

In his article "*Minority as a sociological concept*" (1978), Hans van Amersfoort enlisted a series of characteristics typical of minorities: they "are subordinate segments of complex state societies", they "have special physical or cultural traits which are held in low esteem by the dominant segments of society", they "are self-conscious unites bound together by special traits", their membership "is transmitted by a rule of descent which is capable of affiliating succeeding generations even in the absence of readily apparent special cultural or physical traits" and they "tend to marry within the group" (p. 219). Moreover, minorities have a strong feeling of belonging and their sense of solidarity is based on shared values.

In the case of ethnic minorities, the singled out group of people is characterised by a common cultural history and possesses the same characteristics. According to Eaton (1980, p. 160), "the most common ethnic "identifiers" are race, religion, country of origin, language, and/or cultural background". Bulmer (1999, p. 1) has defined an ethnic minority as follows: "a collectivity within a larger population having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared past, and a cultural focus upon one or more symbolic elements which define the group's identity, such as kinship, religion, language, shared territory, nationality, or physical appearance". Another useful definition of ethnic minority is the one provided in 1995 by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly according to which an ethnic minority is a group of persons in a state who

reside on a territory of that state and are citizens thereof; maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that state; display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, are sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that state or of a region of that state; are

motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their traditions, their religion or their language.

Once we have considered the meanings of the expression “ethnic minority”, which is far from univocal, we should note that this term is often confused with the word migrant or person with a migrant background. By the way, the two terms, even if they share many characteristics, are different. Migrants are an ethnic minority because they are people born in another country or with foreign origins and therefore, they constitute an ethnic minority. However, persons belonging to ethnic minority groups are not necessary people who recently migrated in that area, they may have lived in that place for a long time. According to the contributors of the *Handbook for national unions of students on students with a migrant or ethnic minority background*, “migrants constitute the most recent category of ethnic minorities and often do not hold the citizenship of the country they live in, unlike ethnic/national minorities. Immigrants that are able to foresee citizenship of their host country can later be considered as an ethnic minority” (Ó Maoláin et al., 2016, p. 9). In light of this, we should pay attention to the use of the two terms because they are not interchangeable.

This dissertation focuses on ethnic minorities very broadly intended, both with migrant background or not, and it is based on the definitions we provided above, acknowledging how limiting they can be. However, in some cases, the cultural institutions we selected as case studies, the GAMEC in the first place, use the term “migrants” instead of “ethnic minority”. This is due to the fact that ethnic minorities living on the Italian territory are mostly of migrant origin and, in the last decades, the number of people migrating to Italy has grown a lot. In light of this, we decided to include in our analysis the projects directed to people with migrant background as well and to consider them as a different kind of ethnic minority always trying to pay attention to the proper terminology.

After clarifying the meaning of the term ethnic minority, we want to address the methodological, conceptual and practical challenges that surveying ethnic minorities entails and to state the criteria we decided to stick to in the following analyses.

Ethnic groups can be difficult to define and they can be understood at multiple levels and people are often defined as part of a specific group arbitrarily. This complexity of categorisation of ethnic groups make the researches and the data collections challenging.

First of all, there is a problem with the sample of the surveys about ethnic groups. As pointed out by Font & Méndez (2013, p. 15):

Many surveys of the general population or of particular groups have a sampling frame with which to build the sample but this is often not the case in surveys addressed to ethnic minorities. [...] Only in a limited number of cases will we have access to a reliable list, containing country of origin, nationality or ethnic identity as well as the other necessary information.

In the absence of precise samples and of reliable ethnicity identifications, researchers should find specific, and somehow always incomplete or partial, criteria to follow in order to collect the necessary data and information. Some characteristics, such as the country of birth, may be easy to identify, others are subjective (being perceived and not quantifiable, for instance) and more difficult to collect in a survey context.

Therefore, different strategies have been implemented in order to overcome this difficulty.

For example, the statistics on ethnic minorities can be gathered on the basis of self-identification that is “by asking people to classify themselves as belonging to a particular ethnic minority group” (Ivi, p.46). According to Okazaki & Sue (1995, p. 369), “self-identification of ethnicity by participants’ self-report is the most common method, and this is most often accomplished by a limited categorical listing of ethnic groups, as defined by the investigator”. Furthermore, since “the definition of ethnicity usually includes certain “subjective” aspects such as feelings of identity and of belonging to a group, culture or tradition” (Font & Méndez, 2013, p. 272), asking to the person concerned to which ethnic group he/she thinks to belong could be the best practice.

Another strategy is to sample ethnic minorities based on their surnames. “This method of ascertaining the ethnicity of participants is sometimes the only option, particularly when working with archival data” (Okazaki & Sue, 1995, p. 369), however,

While some researchers have suggested that sampling by surname is possible for certain ethnic minority groups (e.g. for Chinese or South Asian surnames), this approach is far from infallible. Not only there are some individuals with sampled surnames not members of the ethnic minority group, but this approach excludes everyone from the ethnic minority group whose surname is not on the list,

including married women who may have changed their name (Font & Méndez, 2013, p.50).

Another strategy that seems to work and to help obtaining reliable data is the one based on the combination of biological and social elements such as phenotype and national origin. However, according to Schwartz et al. (2014, p. 64) “complex migration histories can complicate the measurement of ethnic/racial identity”. For example, a Senegalese child adopted by a white Italian family may identify himself as both white Italian and black Senegalese. Thus, researchers should take into consideration the boundaries between ethnic groups and the biography of the surveyed subjects.

Therefore, we can conclude by saying that no ethnic classification system is perfect, and none is universally accepted and that, when researchers are unable to ask directly to people concerned to which ethnic group they belong, things become challenging.

For the sake of this dissertation, we were not able submit a survey to all the artists, visitors and staff members of the three cultural institutions we selected and in the case of the visitors and of the staff we were not able to find data about their names, birth places, skin tones, etc. However, as far as it concerns the artists, whose artworks are part of the museums’ permanent collections, we were able to gather some data. We decided to take as sample for our analysis the artists whose works of art are present in the most up-to-date catalogues of the three museums. Then, we studied their biography and we divided them into those born in Western countries (Europe, United States and Canada) and those born in non-Western countries. Afterwards, we considered their family origins and their ethnic features and skin tones and we classified them based on some ethnic groupings that we established starting from the U.S. standard categories used for collecting and presenting data on ethnicity (U.S. Department of Interior, Office of Civil Rights):

- Asian or Pacific Islander: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, Indian subcontinent, or Pacific islands.
- Black: a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- Hispanic or Latino: a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American origin.
- Middle Eastern or North African: a person having origins in any of the original people of Middle East or North Africa.
- White: a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe.

- Multiracial or Biracial: a person having two or more ethnicities.
- Other ethnicity.

Once we divided the sampled artists according to the categories mentioned above, we drew some conclusions about the levels of ethnic diversification of the artists of each museum collection. At the end, we provided a graphic representation of the percentage of white artists and of artists belonging to ethnic minorities inside the museums we selected as case studies. In making this division, we decided to use the ethnic group defined as “white” as parameter to which to compare artists belonging to other non-white ethnic minority groups, both born in Western or non-Western countries. In a few cases that could be confusing, we decided to report the biography of the artist to allow a better understanding of the method we used and of the challenges we run into during our research.

3.3 Artists, visitors and staff diversity

After having clarified the terminology we are going to use and some methodological issues, in this chapter we are going to analyse the level of inclusion of people belonging to ethnic minorities inside the three cultural institutions we selected as case studies.

In particular, we would like to examine the three main groups of subjects operating inside the museums: the artists, the staff members and the visitors. The aim is to understand if the GAMEC, the MAXXI and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo include people belonging to ethnic minorities among the artists of their permanent collections, among their staff and among their visitors and if these institutions reach satisfying levels of inclusivity and diversity.

In order to do it, we contacted the museums and we asked them to provide us with some data about the origins and the country of birth of their artists, staff members and visitors. However, they did not have reliable and sharable data on their employees and their audiences, thus we were not able to deeply analyse these categories, but only to comment based on the information they told us by telephone or that we found online. As far as it concerns the artists, instead, we were provided with the catalogues of the museums’ collections with some information about the artists’ origins and place of birth and, therefore, we were able to analyse these data and to draw some conclusions. We should

note that the catalogues we took into consideration do not include all the artworks present in the collections, but they present the majority of them and the most reknown, and therefore, the researches we made, based on these sources, can be considered sufficient enough in order to draw some conclusions about the ethnic diversity of the artists whose works of art are included in the collections of the GAMEc, the MAXXI, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.

3.3.1 The GAMEc

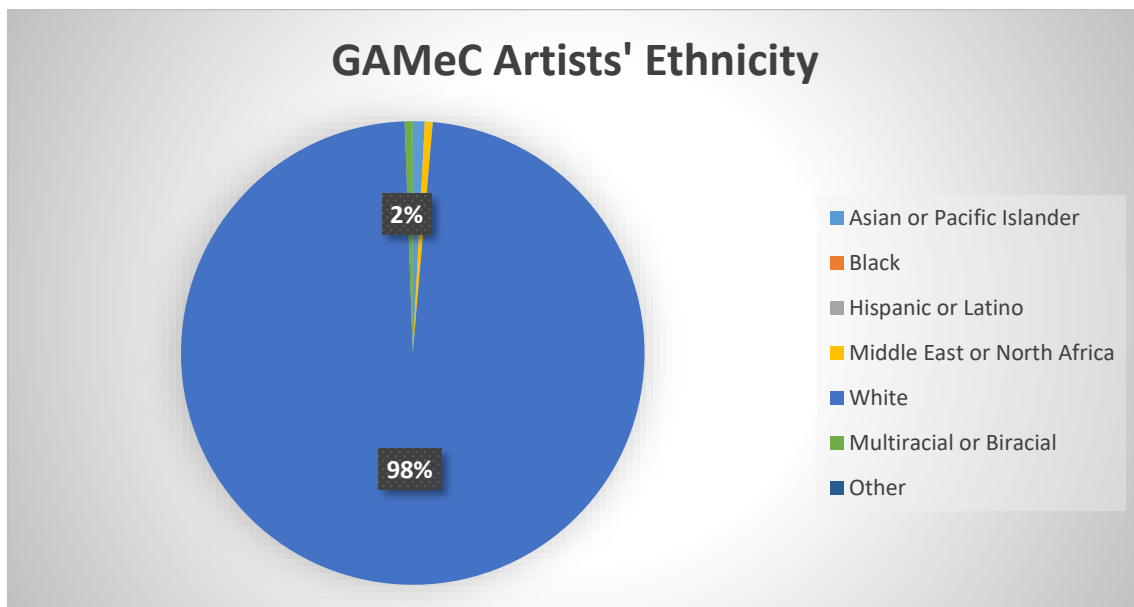
In what follows, we are going to focus on the level of diversity of the artists, staff members and visitors of the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Bergamo.

First of all, we decided to focus on the artists whose works are part of the collections of the Gallery. In order to do so, we analysed the most complete and up-to-date catalogue of the artworks of the GAMEc collections that is the RAAM²⁰ archive which can be easily found online. Based on this archive, we draw a list of all the artists included in it along with some information such as the number of artworks of each artist present in the collections, the country of birth of the artists and some biographical information. Then, we made some research to go back to their ethnicity and to their biographical journey. Only after that we were able to draw some conclusions about their possible belonging to ethnic minority groups.

The RAAM Archive of the GAMEc includes 450 artworks made by 359 artists. 310 of them are born in Italy and are white. Among the artists born in countries other than Italy, 42 are born in Europe or in the United States and are white and only 7 are born in non-Western countries. Therefore, according to the standards we decided to follow, only 7 artists belong to ethnic minority groups, for a total of 7 artworks over 450. However, when considering the biographical details of these artists some exceptions came out. For

²⁰ The RAAM archive is the Research Achive of AMACI Musei, it was created by the will of the Italian Ministry of Culture and of AMACI, the Association of Italian Contemporary Art Museum of which the GAMEc is a member. RAAM is an online archive aimed at promoting the public heritage of contemporary art. The archive responds to a need for accessibility and dissemination of the public contemporary art heritage through methods in line with international standards. RAAM is an archive in progress, continuously updated and integrated with new records from museums. The archive collects the works created from 1966 until today, belonging to the public heritage of the twenty-one museums of contemporary art associated to AMACI. The artworks are owned by the museum or on loan for use by a public body; they are exhibited or not exhibited; on-site or off-site. RAAM includes works of various expressive forms such as painting, sculpture, installations, videos, artist books, works on paper, photographs. However, it does not include engravings, graphics and drawings. The collected data are: museum, artist's name, artist's birth data and place, date of the artwork, typology, technique, measures, inventory code, legal status, photo credits, description, bibliography, location, artist's biography, note.

example, the Chilean architect Roberto Matta was born in Santiago from a Spanish, Basque and French family and, after his graduation in 1935, he moved to Europe where he lived the rest of his life. In light of this, we would not say that he belongs to an ethnic minority because he has European origins and he is white. The same could be said for Pablo Reinoso who is born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1955 from a French family and he has been working in Paris since 1978. His nationality is Argentine-French and he is white. The other 5 artists, namely Latifa Echackch, Yan Pei-Ming, Oren Pinhassi, Pratchaya Phinthong and Chen Zhen, are born in non-Western country, are not white and therefore, even if some of them live and work in Europe or in the United States, we can say that they belong to ethnic minorities.



Based on this data, the level of diversity among the artists present in the collections of the Gallery is not at all satisfactory and seems in contrast with the objectives and the mission of the museum itself. However, we should consider that the collections of the GAMEc were created thanks to donations and that the museum does not buy any artwork. As a matter of fact, the collections are based on a donation policy rather than on an acquisition one; therefore, they depend on the donors' tastes and preferences and not on the choices of the Gallery. The choices of the Gallery emerge in temporary exhibitions only. As a matter of fact, in these occasions the museum curators decide which artists to exhibit and sometimes after these exhibitions some artworks are left to the museum, as in the case of

the temporary shows dedicated to Yan Pei-Ming²¹, Latifa Echackch²², and Pratchaya Phinthong²³. When selecting the artists to display in temporary shows, the GAMeC and its curators have proved to pay attention to diversity and equality issues selecting both male and female artists, blockbuster and emergent ones, Western and not Western ones.

As far as it concerns, the museum staff, the regularly employed people are twelve and then there are about thirty educators hired with VAT number. None belongs to ethnic minorities and they are all born in Italy and none of the people employed in the past had foreign origins either. Nevertheless, there are four museum cultural mediators with a migrant background that are still active and that guide some tours inside the museum. Besides the museum mediators, only the guarding service personnel includes people belonging to ethnic minorities. However, these workers are not directly hired by the Gallery, but by the guarding service company Fidelitas s.p.a. which won the contract. Doctor Brambilla Ranise explained us that the GAMeC acted as a mediator between the Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (SPRAR) of Bergamo and the company Fidelitas s.p.a. trying to facilitate the hiring of people belonging to ethnic minorities. As a matter of fact, the SPRAR presented some people to the GAMeC that hired them as museum guardians for a period of three months thanks to some grants. Once this period ended, if these people were considered ready for the job and wanted to continue this experience, the human resources of the Gallery proposed them to the guarding service company so that they obtained regular jobs. Moreover, few years ago, the GAMeC activated another agreement with the SPRAR in order activate some educational internships. However, until now nobody has shown any interest for this initiative (Fondazione ISMU, n. d.). In light of this, we can conclude saying that for a small size museum with a small number of employees that until few years ago were hired with VAT number, the level of diversity of the staff and of inclusivity of ethnic minorities is quite satisfactory. However, we should highlight the fact that almost all of the people belonging to ethnic minority groups working for the Gallery are employed in the security services and not in more qualified positions. Therefore, the very satisfactory aspect we want to stress is the presence of people with migrant background working as cultural mediators.

²¹ “*Yan Pei-Ming con Yan Pei-Ming*” GAMeC, 2008.

²² “*Latifa Echackch. Le rappel des oiseaux*” GAMeC, 2010.

²³ “*PRATCHAYA PHINTHONG. Give more than you take*” GAMeC, 2011.

The third group of people we want to consider is that of the visitors. Unfortunately, the Gallery told us that they do not have reliable data about the provenance and the ethnicity of their visitors. In the past, they used to ask the country of origin of the people buying an entrance ticket but these data are outdated and partial. Collecting this information has become more difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a matter of fact, visitors are asked to book their tickets online and asking them to fill in a survey, even if a short one, would let the buying procedure become too long. Moreover, asking this information once they enter the museum would be complicated because the ticket office, actually composed by just one person, has already many aspects to control at the moment (ticket, Green Pass, temperature).

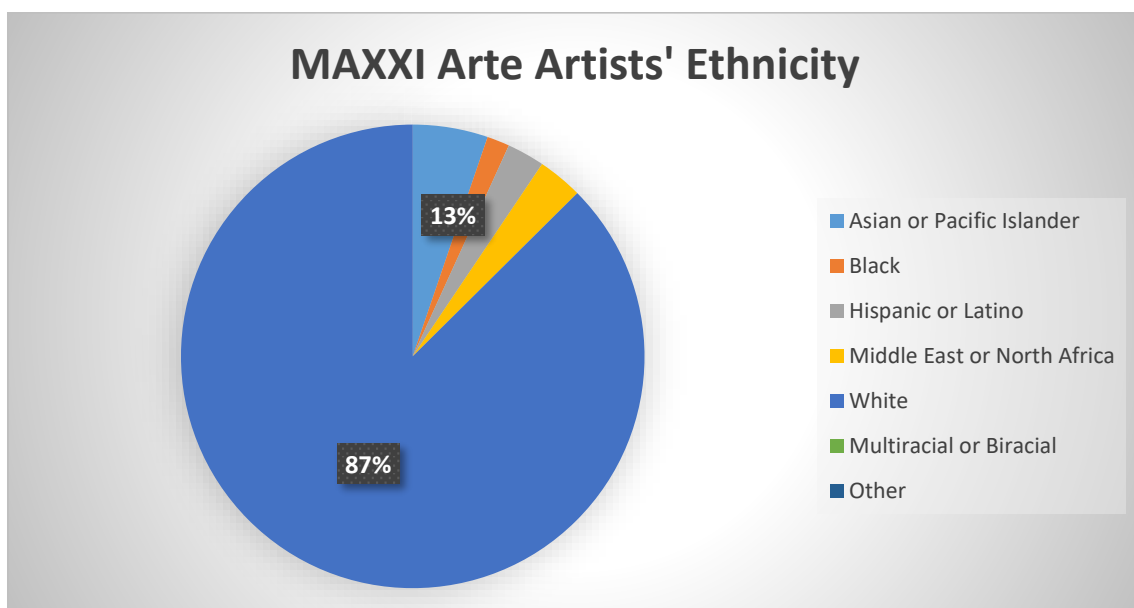
3.3.2 The MAXXI

For this focus on the diversity among the artists included in the MAXXI Arte permanent collection we drew on the catalogue “*MAXXI Arte. Catalogo delle collezioni*” curated by Bartolomeo Pietromarchi and published by Quodlibet in 2017. The catalogue collects the majority of the works of art that are part of the permanent collection of the museum. In the catalogue we find a series of sheets with the name of the artist, the date and place of birth and eventually death, a biographical and stylistic description, the data (title, date, medium, measures) about the artworks and a picture of them.

As for the GAMEC, we analysed the catalogue and we made a list of all the artists included in it collecting data about their country of birth, their biographical journey and the number of artworks present in the MAXXI Arte collection. After that, we studied this information and we drew some conclusions about the level of ethnical diversity.

The catalogue of the MAXXI Arte collection presents 191 artists and 455 works of art. Among these artists, 85 are Italian and white; 77 are born in Western countries and 74 of them are white, while Mark Bradford and Kara Walker are African-American and Malik Nejmi is Franco-Moroccan and the history of his father, the emotional ties with the Moroccan family and the childhood lived between the two countries are the materials that nourishes his artistic practice. The remaining 29 artists are born in non-Western countries, thus, according to the criteria we established, they belong to ethnic minorities. However, this is a hasty conclusion and we should dig more into their biographical journey. For example, in this group, there are 4 artists, namely Candice Breitz, Marlene Dumas,

Kendell Geers and William Kentridge, who are born in South Africa from white families and that are now living in Europe or in the United States and which cannot be considered as belonging to ethnic minorities. Another case worth of notice, is the artist Iran Do Espirito Santo, who is born in Brazil but has Italian origins and is white. The same goes for the Italian-Brazilian artist César Augusto Meneghetti, who lives and works in Italy or the Italian-Palestinian photograph Mustafa Sabbagh, who is born in Jordan by an Italian-Palestinian family, who soon moved to Italy and then to London to work with Richard Avedon. Another similar example is the one of Haim Steinbach who is an Israeli-American artist based in New York City and who cannot be considered as belonging to a minority group. Then, there is the peculiar case of Rirkrit Tiravanija who was born in Argentina and whose father was a Thai diplomat who lived and worked in many countries around the world. Even if born in South America, Tiravanija is not Hispanic, but rather Asian because of his origins and because he now lives and works in Thailand. The last case we want to cite is Anish Kapoor, a worldwide known sculptor, who was born in Mumbai by an élite family with Indian father and Iraqi mother and who moved very early in London where he still lives and works and where he became a naturalised citizen. Having been naturalised and given his belonging to an élite class we could be led to consider Kapoor as belonging to the “white” category, but his origins and the colour of his skin led us to include him among the ethnic minorities. To conclude, we can say that the artists who are part of the MAXXI Arte collection and who can actually be considered as belonging to ethnic minority groups are 21 for a total of 40 works of art.



These numbers are still not satisfactory and do not reflect the diversity of contemporary society, however we should note that there is an improvement if compared to the ones of the GAMeC and this could be due to the fact that the MAXXI has a strong policy of acquisition and is not bound to donations and to the donors' preferences. This diversity and inclusivity is evident also when we consider the temporary exhibitions organised by the museum. As a matter of fact, in the last decade, the MAXXI organised over fifteen temporary exhibitions featuring artists belonging to ethnic minorities such as Mohamed Bourouissa²⁴, Basim Magdy²⁵, Shahzia Sikander²⁶, Amos Gitai²⁷, Doris Salcedo²⁸, Caline Aoun²⁹, Eduardo Stupia³⁰ or Bouchra Khalili³¹ (MAXXI, n. d.).

We asked the museum to give us some information about the number of staff members working there and about their ethnicity and the head of the Public Engagement office, doctor Silvia Garzilli, provided us some data by e-mail in January 2022. In particular, she told us that the actual employees of the MAXXI are 48 they are all white Italian except one and it is interesting to note this person, Hou Hanru who was born in China, occupies one of the top positions of the museum, namely the one of the artistic director.

As far as it concerns the diversity of the visitors, we are not able to provide reliable information because the museum does not carry out visitor studies on a regular basis and they do not collect data about the birth place of the people visiting the museum (MCP Broker, 2014).

3.3.3 The Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

In this section, we are going to analyse the level of diversity among the artists of the private collection of Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, founder and president of the homonymous Foundation, and of the staff members and the visitors of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.

²⁴ “*Peripheral Stages. Mohamed Bourouissa e Tobias Zielony*” MAXXI, 2012.

²⁵ “*Basim Magdy, The Stars Were Aligned For A Century Of New Beginnings*” MAXXI, 2016.

²⁶ “*Shahzia Sikander: Ecstasy As Sublime, Heart As Vector*” MAXXI, 2016.

²⁷ “*AMOS GITAI. Chronicle of an assassination foretold*” MAXXI, 2016.

²⁸ “*Doris Salcedo. Plegaria Muda*” MAXXI, 2012.

²⁹ “*Caline Aoun. Seeing is believing*” MAXXI, 2018.

³⁰ “*Eduardo Stupia. Film screening*” MAXXI, 2019.

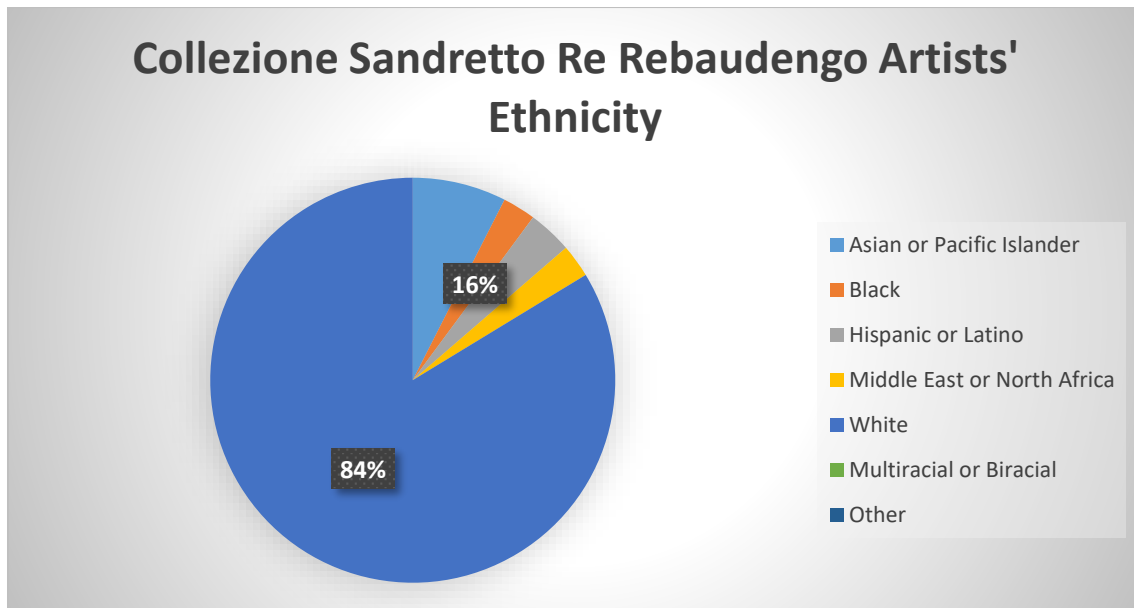
³¹ “*Artapes. Bouchra Khalili*” MAXXI, 2018.

Considering the artists' diversity, we decided to base our research on several sources because we had not access to a complete inventory of the works of art included in the collection. The main source we used is the catalogue of the exhibition "*Bidibidobidiboo. Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" which took place in 2005 at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin. The exhibition and the catalogue, curated by Francesco Bonami, collected the most interesting pieces of the collection. However, this catalogue is outdated and, since 2005, many other artworks have been bought and relying only on that source was not enough. Therefore, we analysed the other exhibitions³² featuring the works of the Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo organised over time in different museums around the world. In these cases, we could not have access to the catalogues but only to the website pages of the exhibitions where there are the lists of the artists shown but no other information about them or about the artworks. Therefore, we were not able to quantify the exact number of artworks for each artist and we had to search on the Internet for the necessary biographical details. Even in this case we compiled a list of the artists with their country of birth and we divided them based on their ethnicity.

The artists whose works are part of the Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and who have been exhibited in one of the above mentioned exhibitions are 227. Among them, 40 are born in Italy and are white, while 153 are born in Western countries other than Italy. However, these artists are not all white, actually, 4 of them belong to ethnic minorities: Louise Lawler, Senga Nengudi, and Paul Pfeiffer are African-American, while Yinka Shonibare is born in London from an Algerian family. The remaining 34 artists are born in non-Western countries. As for the GAMEC and the MAXXI, we should note that not all the artists born in non-Western countries belong to ethnic minority groups. To make only one example, the worldwide known artist William Kentridge is born in 1955 in Johannesburg, South Africa, from a family with European origins and therefore he is white. He studied in South Africa but since the 1980s his works brought him recognition

³² These exhibitions are: "*Glowbowl. Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (Principato di Monaco Salle Quai Antoine 1er, 2007), "*Stop & Go Nuovi film e video della Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (FSRR, 2008), "*L'alchimia dell'arte contemporanea. Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (Centro Saint-Bénin Aosta, 2008), "*H2O Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (Palais Lumière Evian, 2010), "*Il coraggio – Arte Contemporanea dalla FSRR*" (Centro Saint-Bénin Aosta, 2010), "*Plus ultra – Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (MACRO Testaccio Roma, 2011), "*The Collector's choice. Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (Ex Ospedale Sant'Agostino Modena, 2012), "*Dreams of reason. Highlights dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (Centre of Contemporary Art Torun, 2013), "*Spin-off. Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*" (Centro de Arte Contemporanea de Quito, 2015).

throughout the world making him an international artist. Therefore, his origins, his social status and his recognition at a global level ensure that he does not belong to a minority. In conclusion, we can affirm that, according to our research, the ethnic minority artists included in the Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and exhibited in the above mentioned shows are 37 over a total of 227.



In the case of the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection, the level of artists' diversity is higher than the ones of the GAMEC and the MAXXI. It is interesting to note that in this case the percentage of Italian artists is much lower compared with the other two collections: 17.6% vs the 88.5% of the GAMEC and the 44.5% of the MAXXI. This data tells us a lot about the international scope of the Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo which tries to capture artistic productions from all over the world. Another aspect we would like to mention is that the artists' ethnic diversity inside the collection has grown over the past years. As a matter of fact, if we consider only the artists included in the 2005 catalogue "*Bidibidibidiboo. Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*", the number of Asian, black, or other ethnic minority artists is low. Therefore, it is presumable that, if we could have access to the whole and up-to-date catalogue of the collection, the percentage of artists belonging to ethnic minority groups would be higher.

This trend and international scope is evident also when focusing on the temporary exhibitions organised by the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in the last decade. Some examples are the solo exhibitions of artists such as Chao Kao³³, an emergent artist born in China in 1978 and now living in Oregon (US), Adrià Villar Rojas³⁴, an Argentine sculptor born in 1980, Ghita Skali³⁵, a Moroccan artist now living between France and North Africa whose work is characterised by a strong focus on social issues and an interest in subversion, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye³⁶, a Black British painter whose paintings are also part of the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Collection, Michael Armitage³⁷, a young artist born in Nairobi who re-elaborates through his artworks the contradictory dynamics of contemporary Kenya, or Martine Syms³⁸, a Black-American artist whose work explores the representations of the black female body. Along with these solo exhibitions, the Foundation organised also group shows including artists belonging to ethnic minorities.

The second group we want to take into consideration is the museum staff. We contacted several people working for the Foundation, but they did not give us precise data about the number of employees and about their ethnicity. However, based on the information about the team that can be found on the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo website we can affirm that the employees are 21 and, except for one person born in France, they are all Italian. Therefore, according to this information, we can conclude that the employees working in the offices of the Foundation do not belong to ethnic minorities. Given this, we do not know if among the people hired with VAT number, the interns, the cultural mediators, the security services or the other categories of workers there are some people belonging to ethnic minority groups.

A category worthy of notice, in this specific case, are the curators. As a matter of fact, since 2007 the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation promotes the *Young Curators Residency Programme* that is a research residency in Italy aimed at developing the professional and critical skills of the selected curators and at spreading knowledge of the Italian art scene on an international level. This programme is dedicated only to three selected international young curators per year and at the end of the programme they have the opportunity to curate an exhibition at the Fondazione (Fondazione Sandretto Re

³³ “Chao Kao. *Artland Series*” FSRR, 2012.

³⁴ “Adrià Villar Rojas. *Rinascimento*” FSRR, 2016.

³⁵ “Ghita Skali – *Palm attacks: a few invasive species*” FSRR, 2017.

³⁶ “Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. *Opere dalla Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo*” FSRR, 2018.

³⁷ “Michael Armitage. *The promised land*” FSRR, 2019.

³⁸ “Martine Syms: *Neural Swamp*” FSRR, 2021.

Rebaudengo, n. d.). Since 2007, forty-eight international curators were selected to take part to the programme and eleven of them belong to ethnic minorities, more specifically five are Hispanic or Latino and six are Asian or Pacific Islanders. This programme confirms the international dimension typical of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.

As far as it concerns the diversity of the visitors of the museum, we cannot provide a reliable analysis because the Foundation does not collect data about their audiences and their provenance.

3.4 Virtuous projects

After having analysed the ethnic diversity levels of the artists, the staff members and the visitors of our three case studies, we move on to the virtuous projects put in place by these cultural institutions in order to include and represent ethnic minorities living on the Italian territory.

The projects we are going to focus on have different characteristics, they can be both long-term or short-term, they can be self-contained initiatives or related to the permanent collections or to a specific temporary exhibition, they can be realised by the sole museum or in collaboration with external associations, they can be devoted to children, young adults or adults, etc. However, all these projects share the same main objective that is to bring people belonging to ethnic minorities inside Italian museums both as producers and consumers. As a matter of fact, some of the initiatives we are going to talk about are dedicated to artists, some to potential staff members such as cultural mediators, but the vast majority is dedicated to potential visitors who, thanks to their alternative narratives offer a new perspective on the collections or the temporary exhibitions affecting their meaning. It is only by involving these people in all the different fields and at all the different levels that these museums can become more equal and diverse.

Through this analysis we want to demonstrate how Italian cultural institutions are trying to involve ethnic minorities and we want to illustrate some possible strategies that have been implemented in the last two decades.

In studying and presenting these virtuous projects, we have often resorted to the seminal researches made by two work groups. The first one is *Patrimonio e Intercultura* that, as

we can read on the website (n.d), “is an on-line resource created by the Fondazione ISMU with a view of supporting all those professionals who are engaged not only in the promotion of immigrants’ cultural participation, but also and above all in the development of diverse and inclusive heritage communities”. This website provides us with examples of good practices, and with resources and tools that are fundamental opportunities for mutual learning. The other work group is *Patrimonio di Storie* founded by three experts of cultural mediations programs: Simona Bodo, Silvia Mascheroni and Maria Grazia Panigada. The work group *Patrimonio di Storie* promotes and encourages correct disclosure as a crucial element to increase the awareness and sensitivity of the citizens towards their cultural heritage and particular attention is paid to “new” citizens belonging to ethnic minority groups.

3.4.1 The GAMeC

The Galleria di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea has been actively working for years on accessibility combining usual educational activities implemented by many other museums with activities specifically dedicated to people that do not know the museum and associate it with discomfort and inaccessibility. People with physical or mental disabilities, people in jails, migrants, and ethnic minorities are among the categories of people addressed by the projects implemented by the Educational Services of the GAMeC.

Between 2001 and 2004 the Educational Services of the Gallery carried out the pilot project “*Arte, Formazione e Intercultura*” with the elementary school Fratelli Calvi of Bergamo. The main aim of the initiative according to the responsible of the Educational department of the museum Giovanna Brambilla Ranise, was to

Articulate a didactic and training proposal aimed at the context of classrooms characterised by the presence of a high percentage of boys and girls from other countries, whose entry into the school was not accompanied by a complete (or sufficient) mastery of the Italian language, such to guarantee them a harmonious insertion inside the school and its programming (Brambilla Ranise, 2007, p. 102, my translation).

Therefore, the school decided to offer solicitations and proposals capable of creating bridges and networks within the students and the classrooms and asked the Gallery to collaborate in this direction.

After this first project, the Gallery decided to start a deep meditation and research on the actual situation of the relation between the museum and ethnic minority groups. The first and fundamental consequence of this meditation period was the birth of the project called *OspitiDONOre* that took place at the GAMEC in 2006. Some women and a young man who attended an advanced course of Italian language at the Centro EDA of Bergamo worked together with the Educational Services team on the topic of the gift. This topic is central because the main collections of the Gallery come from donations of private collectors. At the end of the meetings, the participants were asked to choose an object representing their relationship with the city of Bergamo. These objects have been photographed by Alfonso Modonesi and exhibited in a small exhibition inside the Gallery. The objectives of this project were to create a relation between ethnic minorities and the museum through the common concept of “gift” and to let the participants become the protagonists of the creative process (Ibidem).

Thanks to this pilot experience and to the evidence of the fact that ethnic minorities living in Italy felt excluded by cultural institutions, the need of a figure of mediator between the museum and the ethnic minority communities became clear to the GAMEC staff. This is why in 2007 the course for museum mediators, founded by the Fondazione per la Comunità Bergamasca, was born. This project originated from the general cultural policy of the Gallery aimed at breaking down all sort of barriers, of physical, economic or cultural nature, and at guaranteeing accessibility to the art for all. This course was destined to an adult audience aged more than eighteen years old, with migrant origins, permanently resident in the Province of Bergamo, with a regular residence permit, a good knowledge of the Italian language and a good level of integration in the reference community. This last aspect was fundamental because this way the other members of the community would have been enticed to visit the Gallery guided by a mediator speaking their language. The course was held from February to May 2007 and it was articulated in twelve meetings of two hours each. The course was for free, but the participants were asked to pay a deposit which would then be returned in order to guarantee the seriousness of the subscribers. At the end of the course, the participants took an exam and received a diploma during a ceremony held by the head of the Educational Services of the GAMEC,

the Director of the museum and the Mayor of Bergamo. The new professional figure of the museum mediator became the trait d'union between the museum and the ethnic minority communities. He/she is able, thanks to the knowledge of the history of the museum, of its collections and of the temporary exhibitions, to communicate this heritage to people who normally do not come into contact with it. As a matter of fact, in the following year, each museum mediator had at his/her disposal a package of ten guided tours aimed at his/her compatriots and paid by the GAMeC. These guided tours were held in the mother language of the mediator and of the ethnic minorities communities taking part to them. The entrance to the museum was free for the people taking part to these tours and the mediators were regularly paid for their work. According to the head of the Educational Services of the GAMeC, the ambitious objectives of this project were:

To pursue a path that supports the right to cultural heritage, to bring migrant adults closer to the museum, a place they had never been to, to find in the condition of “migrant” a wealth to put at the museum service in order to involve compatriots in visits to the collections and the exhibitions. All this to make the GAMeC a place of integration, knowledge and mutual cultural enrichment, to support people’s cultural citizenship by making them protagonists of the museum’s process of opening and accessibility and to find a platform of cultural exchange and sharing in the arts (Brambilla Ranise, 2009, p. 196, my translation).

However, the work of the museum mediators does not consist only in bringing one’s compatriots to the museum during the guided tours. They have been involved in different ways in the programming of the GAMeC. For example, their interviews on the topic of the return were at the centre of the installation titled “*Futuro ritorno*” made by the artist Luca Vitone in 2008. The mediators were also asked to promote in the South American communities the film festival “*Sudamerican, Destinazione Cinema*” that took place in 2008. In conclusion, these young adults were involved in several other cultural initiatives of different kinds.

The project “*Mediatori Museali*” took place only in 2007 and was organised as just one course for one group of mediators. However, some museum mediators still bring people belonging to ethnic minorities to the GAMeC organising guided tours in their mother language. Even if it came to an end, the outcomes of the project are worthy of notice. The initiative saw the participation of forty subscribers coming from twenty-six different

countries and it allowed to train thirty-one migrants as professional figures. Twenty of them started to bring their compatriots to the museum and as a result, an average of eight tours per year from 2007 to 2021 were organised by museum mediators. The feedbacks acquired by the groups of people that were conducted in the guided tours by the mediators have shown how much, for many of them, entering the Gallery has been an achievement. For many of these people it was the first time in their life they entered a museum and doing it guided by a person close to them and speaking their language helped them feeling important guests. The course for museum mediators has been a successful project and it has obtained numerous acknowledgments and appreciations at a national and European level because it is an easily exportable paradigm of museum educational service. It became a best practice spread in the museums field both in Italy and abroad (among the museums that have reproduced this model we could mention the Pinacoteca di Brera in Milan, the Accademia Carrara in Bergamo, the Museo del Cinema in Turin and the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico “Pigorini” in Rome) (Fondazione ISMU, n. d.). Among the cultural institutions that were inspired by this project there is the Accademia Carrara of Bergamo, which asked the GAMEC to support them in their desire to repeat the same experience in their museum activating a course about art from the 14th to the 18th century.

In 2014, seven years after the creation of a group of museum mediators, the Educational Services of the GAMEC gave birth to another project called “*12 narratori in cerca d'autore*”. The project involved twelve museum mediators coming from different countries and it was realised in collaboration with the Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti of Milan (NABA). As we can read on the website Patrimonio e Intercultura of the Fondazione ISMU (n. d.), the initiative allowed to create

An intertwining of the permanent collections, the intangible cultural heritage (memories and traditions) and of cultural identities (local, European and with an international opening), which, thanks to the collaboration with the Digital Video course of NABA – Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti of Milan, has allowed to engage the new generations in a creative planning (my translation).

More specifically, the project consisted in a training course directed by Maria Grazia Panigada that brought to the creation of some narratives both in Italian and in the mediators’ mother languages of some of the paintings of the Gallery. These

interpretations are the result of the interweaving of historical, artistic, autobiographic and emotional elements and they are dictated by a new modality of approach to the artworks. Once these narratives were written down, the NABA students re-elaborated them transforming them in videos. The final outcomes of this projects were the realisation of a small guide with the narratives of the mediators about the artworks of the museum and the videos.

Another project that is part of this idea of the narrative as a tool of mediation of cultural heritage, of promotion of active citizenship and of creation of new belongings is the one titled “*My Place / My Texts*”. This initiative, promoted by the Municipality of Bergamo (Assessorato alla Cultura and Assessorato alle Politiche Giovanili) and financed by the Fondazione Cariplo, took place in 2016 and involved migrants of second generation, aged from fifteen to twenty-three years old, studying in Bergamo. The project was dedicated to the rethinking of a modality of interaction with art: the written text. As a matter of fact, these young adults took part to some lessons of professor Rita Ceresoli about the artworks of the Gallery. Afterwards, they have been called to rewrite the catalogue of the GAMeC permanent collection describing three or four works of art in collaboration with professor Panigada. This new catalogue has then been distributed for free in the secondary schools of Bergamo and the province and free copies were made available for the students who went visiting the museum on their own profiting of the free admission tickets. The project was aimed at creating a link between the young adults of migrant origin and their peers through processes of creative participation. In this way the image of the museum as a place of devotion and respect was debunked and young people were enticed to participate enriching the cultural heritage of the Gallery with different and multicultural interpretations based on their personal experiences.

In 2017 the participants, together with the artists Massimiliano and Gianluca de Serio, developed the second step of this project, called “*My Place / My Face*”. This time the rethinking of the interaction with the art and of the collection was based on the creation of a video. The young adults selected for the initiative participated to some meetings aimed at introducing them to the collections of the museum and to contemporary art more in general. Afterwards, they chose some artworks and created short videos in which they offered their analysis and interpretations of the selected works. The resultant thirty-eight videos were presented to the public and, after being edited and standardised, they have been loaded on tablets used for the visit to the Gallery.

In 2018, the GAMeC developed the third phase of the project: “*My Place / My Voice*”. In this occasion, the participants, after a series of meetings aimed at developing the knowledge of the permanent collection, imagined some narratives in which their biography was interwoven with the history and the meaning of the artworks they chose. Between March and May 2018, the participants guided some free tours around the museum. Fifteen narratives were produced, one for each kid, each one offering a different point of view related to personal biographic stories.



Figure 21: picture taken during one of the meetings of the project "My Place / My Texts" (courtesy of Giovanna Brambilla Ranise)

The last initiative realised by the GAMeC we would like to mention is a complex project that culminated with the opening of the exhibition “*Museo, terra di migrazione*” in 2018. For this occasion, the Gallery collaborated with two different realities: Casa Circondariale of Bergamo and Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. As we can read on the website of the museum, the project “intends to present the concept of migration not only as linked to the geographical origin of a person, but as a temporary condition of existence” (GAMeC, n.

d., my translation). The main objective was to highlight the GAMeC commitment in involving categories of people that generally are not part of museums audiences and that are somehow associated to a condition of fragility; not only migrants, therefore, but also people with psychophysical difficulties or people unable to access the museum, as in the case of prisoners. As a matter of fact, the exhibition gathered works realised by the prisoners of the Casa Circondariale and by people affected by Alzheimer who took part to a project of the Educational Services of Palazzo Strozzi. Twenty-two students of the Institute Vittorio Emanuele II of Bergamo were called to act as cultural mediators of the exhibition after a training process and a meeting with the prisoners. Thus, contemporary art served as a tool to break down barriers and create bridges between different categories of citizens, some of which living in a marginalised condition. In order to promote the visit to the exhibition, the Gallery selected some local associations, such as Caritas Diocesana and Corridoi Umanitari, that involved ethnic minorities as visitors. Many young migrants of second generation had the opportunity to reflect on the issue of migration and to enter the museum for the first time. The visit of the exhibition was free and visitors who booked through associations linked to the issue of migration had also free access to the exhibition “*Black Hole*” held in the Gallery and presenting works by renowned artists such as Anselm Kiefer and Anish Kapoor.

While we are writing, the GAMeC is working on another interesting project promoted by Cooperativa Ruha³⁹: “*Migrantour*”. It is an initiative of responsible tourism aimed at promoting the discover of the cultures present in the city of Bergamo through the realisation of intercultural walks guided by people with migrant backgrounds. The GAMeC is one of the partner of the project and these walks will include the visit of the museum (Cooperativa Ruha, n. d.).

For these projects and for its inclusive practices intended not only for ethnic minorities but for all the vulnerable categories which are generally not considered the typical museum visitors, the GAMeC obtained some national and international recognitions. In particular, in 2020 the museum obtained the acknowledgment of the United Nations High

³⁹ Cooperativa Ruha is a cooperative born in 2009 in Bergamo with the aim of sustaining the human promotion of the community and the social integration of the Italian and foreign citizens. It offers welcoming services, job placement of disadvantaged people, training courses on the themes of dialogue and intercultural encounter that aim at the respect and recognition of every human being.

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for having favoured the professional integration of refugees and for having supported their integration process in Italy (Fossi, 2020).

To conclude, we would like to stress out that the political and social situation in our country has changed a lot in the last years and that the COVID-19 pandemic made all kinds of projects and planning more complicated and difficult to realise. With the latest centre-right governments the political situation in Italy and in the territory of Bergamo has changed. The context of welcoming and integrating migrants and ethnic minority communities has changed, there has been a strong political squeeze, the migrants' arrivals have been stopped and Italy, and in particular the northern regions, are considered a place of transit and not of staying. Today, there are fewer and fewer migrants who come to stay in our territory and these people do not have and cannot have basic rights such as health services, documents, jobs, etc. Therefore, talking about rights of education and culture in the absence of other basic rights is out of context and utopian. Migrants and ethnic minority communities are no more rooted in the territory, they are less sedentary and involving them in long-term projects has become very hard. Moreover, these new waves of migration are mainly male and without women and families all the networks are falling apart. Therefore, this new migratory situation needs to be assessed, cultural institutions have to deal with invisible migrants and ethnic minorities and the GAMEC, as well, is questioning its work and is trying to understand how to deal with this new context. According to doctor Brambilla Ranise, we should ask what can a museum do towards these people? The other big issue at the moment is the COVID-19 pandemic. As a matter of fact, many of these people with migrant background are not vaccinated and do not have the Green Pass certificate and they are scared by the virus therefore, they cannot or do not want to access the museum. Moreover, the instable sanitary situation makes any planning difficult. The Gallery, thus, is trying to change its strategies and to find new ones suitable for this new socio-political and sanitary situation.

3.4.2 The MAXXI

Since its opening, the MAXXI showed an interest in the involvement of ethnic and migrant communities living in Rome and in the surrounding area. Therefore, the museum implemented various projects in collaboration with associations and communities' representatives aimed at involving and representing a wider audience.

One of these projects was called “*My Iran*” and was realised in 2015 in the framework of the temporary exhibition “*Unedited History. Iran 1960-2014*” which narrated the Iranian visual culture from the Sixties to present days through over 200 artworks. The project took place thanks to the artistic director of the museum, Hou Hanru, who considered the involvement of the Iranian community of Rome as an opportunity to provide the contents of the temporary exhibition with a multi-vocal perspective. Therefore, the Educational Department of the museum, headed by Marta Morelli, in collaboration with the external expert Silvia Mascheroni, put together a group of Iranian participants of different ages, backgrounds and professions and asked them to interpret their heritage together. This was the first MAXXI intercultural mediation project related to a temporary exhibition. During ten meetings of a writing workshop, the participants focused on a selection of artworks around which they made up personal stories that start from the artworks and narrate personal histories, memories and feelings. The short stories resulting from this workshop were then published in a brochure, and video interviews of the participants were recorded and showed on a screen at the end of the exhibition. These multi-vocal narrations allowed visitors to read the exhibition from a different perspective and with a different interpretation other than the institutional one offered by the museum itself (MAXXI, n. d.). According to the analysis of the Fondazione ISMU, the main goals of this project were:

To enhance the Museum’s educational offer through the design and implementation of its first intercultural mediation project devoted to a temporary exhibition; to actively involve members of the Iranian community living in Rome in the interpretation of the exhibition, so that different perspectives (not only those of curators and experts) may be expressed and explored; to reach new audiences, in particular, Rome’s “new citizens” coming from Iran; to foster interaction between visitors with a diverse cultural and social background (Patrimonio e Intercultura, n. d.).

Another similar project was realised in occasion of the exhibition “*African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria*”, which inaugurated in June 2018. The exhibition offered an overview of the artistic and cultural scene of the African continent presenting thirty-four artists reflecting on the social and cultural transformations happening in Africa. In this occasion, the MAXXI Education proposed “*Afropolitan*”, an intercultural mediation project involving young people coming from different countries of the African continent.

Even in this case, the Educational Services of the museum selected nine young adults, both migrants of second generation or born in Africa, and trained them about the contents of the temporary exhibition “*African Metropolis. Una città immaginaria*”. After this training phase and once the exhibition opened to the public, the intercultural mediators were asked to be inside the exhibition space and to dialogue with the visitors offering them a new and different perspective on the African cultural heritage. As we can read in the website of the museum, the aim was to

Produce alternative interpretations to the curatorial art-historical one of a selection of artworks, during participatory planning meetings. Girls and boys interpret the most recent cultural heritage of the African continent on display, creating new shared meanings starting from their own life experiences (MAXXI, n. d., my translation).



Figure 22: picture taken during one of the meetings with the participants to the project (courtesy of Giovanni Gervasi and Marco Riccardi)

Another interesting initiative promoted since 2014 by the MAXXI is “*Narrazioni da Museo a Museo*”. This project aims at creating new and multidisciplinary paths allowing the museum to become an active subject, a meeting and sharing point of experiences. The various editions of this initiative created some occasions to welcome inside the museum

plural voices, witnesses and narratives in order to deepen our knowledge of contemporary art and architecture.

One of the meetings of “*Narrazioni da Museo a Museo*” was organised in March 2016 in collaboration with Museo Pigorini, an ethnic museum in Rome now part of the bigger Museo delle Civiltà. A group of boys and girls attending the Centro Astalli⁴⁰ was called to narrate to the visitors of the museum their own experiences inside the two Roman museums, the MAXXI and the Museo Pigorini, and their own point of view on the theme of the transformation that was at the core of the temporary exhibition “*Transformers*” taking place at the MAXXI.

Always in this context, we could insert the initiative “*Narrazione dedicate all’Afghanistan e a Maria Grazia Cutuli*” organised by the museum in May 2016. In this occasion, the Afghan film-maker Morteza Khaleghi, together with some of his compatriots of the centre CivicoZero⁴¹, narrated the political events of their country, the escape experience and the reconstruction of a new identity in a new country. All this happened in front of the artworks “*Le Orme*” by Alighiero Boetti, an Italian artist who worked a lot in Afghanistan and commissioned to Afghan women the realisation of his famous embroidered artworks (MAXXI, n. d.).

3.4.3 The Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

The Fondazione and its team have always shown an interest in involving and including all different categories of audiences in their activities and people belonging to ethnic minorities are part of these categories. Therefore, the Foundation put in place different projects and initiatives devoted to ethnic minority groups in order to let them feel welcomed and listen to in a public space such as the museum.

The first virtuous project implemented by the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo we would like to mention is called “*A vision of my own*” and it was developed in 2008. The initiative was realised in collaboration with the CTP (Permanent Territorial Centre) “Drovetti”, a local agency for adult education and training, and with the video artist and

⁴⁰ Centro Astalli is the Italian section of the Jesuit Refugee Service, a catholic international organisation engaged in activities and services that aim to accompany, serve and defend the refugees’ rights.

⁴¹ CivicoZero Onlus is a social cooperative partner of Save the Children and it manage a day-care centre dedicated unaccompanied minors.

director Gianluca De Serio. The project was funded and supported by the Fondazione itself and the Municipality of Turin and it was the pilot project of the programme “*A heritage for all*” launched by the City of Turin – Department of Cultural Heritage Education in 2005 in order to “promote a culturally inclusive approach to the mediation and interpretation of museum collection” (Patrimonio e Intercultura, n. d.). The support of the Department was fundamental also in training terms because it gave to the education staff of the Fondazione the opportunity to take part in the European project “*Museums tell many stories*”. The education team, therefore, explored, along with their European colleagues, story-telling and other forms of active involvement of ethnic minority communities in structuring museum visits and interpreting the collections. The project “*A vision of my own*” employed the technique and the language of the video in order to explore themes related to the temporary exhibitions organised by the Foundation. These themes were identity, journey, the experience of distance and proximity and the reflection on collective and individual past and present. First of all, the recipients of the project recipients, namely a group of twenty-five foreign students of the CTP “Drovetti” aged between sixteen and eighteen years old, visited the temporary exhibitions “*Stop&Go*”, “*Segni di Vita*” and “*Greenwashing*” organised by the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. Then, the participants took part to a video set workshop focused on the exploration of moving images, on the concepts of light and shade and of body and movements. After this preparatory moment, the students met the artist Gianluca De Serio who presented them his work and research on the theme of identity and of the portrait of citizens with migrant background. This helped the participants better understand the concept of “video portrait” and of story-telling through images. Then, the students took part to a story-telling workshop and each of them established the storyboard, the setting and the shooting of his/her video. The final output of the project was the realisation of three videos that were presented to the public in the auditorium of the Foundation at the presence of the students, their families and various cultural institutions professionals. The project was aimed at promoting cultural participation of ethnic minorities and migrant communities and at letting them conceive the exhibition spaces and the museum in general as places for dialogue and knowledge production rather than merely knowledge consumption. This was possible thanks to the experimentation of new ways of interacting and engaging with cultural heritage. Furthermore, the initiative gave these young students an opportunity for self-representation and expression through a contemporary creative medium such as the video. The workshop activities provided a platform for supporting

the building of self-identity on the one hand and for encouraging cross-cultural interaction and exchange on the other (Patrimonio e Intercultura, n. d.).

The second project we would like to present is “*City Telling*”. It was organised in 2009 in direct continuity with “*A vision of my own*” with the intent of expanding the undertaken work and to give continuity to the exchange between the CTP “Drovetti” and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo. The initiative has been realised in partnership with the CTP “Drovetti”, the Museo Nazionale del Cinema of Turin, the Museo d’Arte Moderna of Bologna (MAMbo), a group of students from an artistic local high school, the communication agency Ars Media and the 3rd District of the City of Turin with its Urban Eco-Museum. The project was funded by the Foundation and thanks to European funding. The target group were young students with migrant background aged between fourteen and twenty and attending the CTP “Drovetti”. In the first phase of the project, the team composed by the education staff of the Foundation, the teachers of the CTP “Drovetti”, Gianluca De Serio and the photographer Anna Largaiolli exchanged views and ideas about the theme of the project, namely the city, about the territory to explore during the project and the methodology to follow, namely the story-telling and a pluralistic and interdisciplinary approach. In the second phase, the students have been actively involved in exploring the territory starting from the sharing of their geo-cultural origins through narratives and objects. Then, Gianluca De Serio and Anna Largaiolli organised fifteen meetings during which they guided the participants in two itineraries, one devoted to video, and the other to photographic storytelling. The two groups developed a personal route across the urban space and they identified some spots around the city. Afterwards, they collected their impressions and feelings in a journal made of photographs and videos. The final output was the creation of four videos and two photographic strips that are part of a bigger multimedia interface containing all the audio-visual contributions realised also by the participants of the project “*City telling*” implemented by the MAMbo and of the participants of “*MAP for Torino*” organised by the Museo del Cinema. The students of the artistic high school projected the graphics of the videos and photographs, while the platform has been implemented by Ars Media (Simone, 2009). Once again the main goal of the project was to increase the opportunities for cultural participation of young migrants. In this case, these people with migrant background were provided with new tools to better know the territory in which they live, to develop a greater sense of belonging and to build a space of cultural and linguistic

interaction. Another objective was to encourage the learning of the Italian language and to develop transversal competences. In the long-term, one of the main aim of the project was to contribute to the establishment of a strong bond between the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo and the young adults with migrant background so to increase the confidence level with cultural institutions (Patrimonio e Intercultura, n. d.). This objective has been achieved, because, once the project ended, some of the participants decided to autonomously visit the permanent collection of the MAMbo (partner of the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation in the realisation of “*City telling*”) and to take part to the workshops related to the temporary exhibition of Gilberto Zorio hosted at the museum of Bologna in 2009 (Del Gaudio, 2010).

Another interesting project aimed at involving people belonging to ethnic minorities implemented by the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo is “*Windwörter – Windwords*”. It has been initiated by the Education Department of the Foundation in 2010 and it was funded by the Fondazione CRT per l’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea⁴² in the frame of the program “*ZonArte. The space and time where audiences meet contemporary art*” during which the education departments of six contemporary art institutions presented their activities. The project is dedicated to an adult audience composed by teachers and students of local centres for adult education, by cultural mediators with a migrant background, by artists, translators, students from the Academy of Fine Arts and the Scuola Holden, by families and communities living in the neighbourhood. The whole project revolved around some crucial questions: “Is there a word in your own language that you particularly miss using? One which has no equivalent in Italian, and/or cannot express the same concepts or feelings?” and it consisted in a discussion about the use of words through the languages of art (ZonArte, 2010). The workshop “*Windwörter – Windwords*” was inspired by the work of the German artist Rupprecht Matthies. As a matter of fact, according to museum anthropologist Christina Kreps, “Matthies’ work is inspired by the exchange of ideas, human interactions and relationships, and the words of people he encounters in his everyday life in a variety of communities and contexts” (ZonArte, n. d.). Firstly, the Foundation started a dialogue with Matthies in order to establish the guideline and practices. Then, the Educational staff consulted cultural

⁴² The Fondazione Arte Moderna e Contemporanea CRT is a foundation constituted in 2000 by the Fondazione CRT in order to enrich and valorise the cultural and artistic heritage of Turin and Piemonte. The Foundation buy new works of art and put them at disposal of the public and of the cultural institutions of the territory and it realise projects for the development and efficacy of the art system.

mediators and teachers from the centres for adult education. Thirdly, the team carried out researches on relevant literature and on contemporary artists using language and words as main elements of their artistic practice. After this preliminary phase, the project consisted in two meetings. During the first meeting there was a presentation of some artworks made by Rupprecht Matthies, a moment of open discussion on the words emerging from the different experiences of the participants, and a “reworking” of the selected words based on their sound. In the second meeting, words were further “reworked” through various media. Then there was a debate around the meanings and shapes of these words and around the concept of translation. The participants were asked to imagine a virtual setting in the urban context for their word/installations. The list of the words proposed by the participants, along with all the texts and images were finally published on the blog of ZonArte. According to the analysis made by Patrimonio e Intercultura (n. d.), the goal of the project was “to encourage active participation and to promote exchange and empathy between participants by creating a common space of reflection on the challenges for an individual to speak in a language that is foreign to him/her”.



Figure 23: picture taken during the workshop (courtesy of Andrea Guermani)

In conclusion, all the projects we presented in this chapter are aimed at developing a relationship with people belonging to ethnic minority groups living on the Italian territory and at enticing them to take part to the many activities of the museums. Taking part to these activities could mean to become a museum cultural mediator, to create something that is going to be exhibited inside the exhibition spaces, or simply to visit the permanent collections or the temporary shows. By taking part to the initiatives organised by cultural institutions, people belonging to ethnic minorities bring in new points of view and interpretations of the cultural heritage enriching the experience of all the people entering the museums.

Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the dissertation by summarising the key research findings in relation to the research aims and question and discussing the value and contribution thereof. It will also review the limitations of the study and propose opportunities for future research.

This study aimed to understand the nature of the relation between people belonging to ethnic minorities and cultural institutions in Western countries, and especially in Italy, and how this relation has changed in the epoch of post-coloniality and under the pressure of the Black Lives Matter protests.

By analysing the history and the claims of the Black Lives Matter movement, this dissertation has shown how much these activists across the Western world reshaped the cultural landscape in which the art system operates. This activist movement has brought attention towards often ignored structures of power that generate inequality, even inside the art system, and towards debates around issues such as representation, identity, racism and discrimination. The advent of the Black Lives Matter movement in Italy has given a boost to these matters in our country too and this has been the starting point of our dissertation.

Based on the statistics that we have analysed in the second chapter of this dissertation, it can be concluded that people belonging to ethnic minorities still occupy a marginal place inside the art world. For example, the non-white artists inside U.S. major museums in 2019 consisted in the 14.5% only (Topaz et al., 2019), and just 10% of the artists represented by New York City top forty-five art galleries belong to ethnic minorities (Neuendorf, 2017). Even when considering the art market, this disparity becomes evident: only the 1.2% of the global auction market between 2008 and 2018 was devoted to artworks made by African American artists (Halperin & Burns, 2018). The situation does not change if we consider the museum staff. According to *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museums Staff Demographic Survey*, in 2018, 72% of the staff of the surveyed museums was non-Hispanic white (Westermann, Sweeney & Schonfel, 2019). Even most of the visitors of the museums in the United States, namely 91%, according to a study of 2010, are white (Reach Advisors, 2010). In light of this, we can conclude that

cultural and artistic institutions in the United States and United Kingdom are still a place reserved to white people in which ethnic minority communities have a marginal role.

Unfortunately, we were not able to provide a similar overview about the Italian situation because there are no research or statistics about the presence of people belonging to ethnic minorities inside the Italian art system. It is precisely this lack of data and studies that seems to us symptomatic of the absence of attention towards these categories in our country.

However, further findings show that the diversification of the staff, the audience and the artists and the consequent inclusion of people belonging to ethnic minority groups and a general decolonisation of the collections are often among the goals set by cultural institutions in Western countries and that a progress in this direction is being made in recent times.

The results of our research about the Italian case studies we chose, namely the GAMEC, the MAXXI and the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation, indicate that the ethnic diversity of their artists, staff members and visitors do not reflect the ethnic diversity of Italian contemporary society. As a matter of fact, only 2% of the artists present in the GAMEC collections, 13% of the ones of the MAXXI Arte collection, and 16% of the ones of the Collezione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo belong to ethnic minority groups. No official data are collected in relation to the ethnicity and provenance of the staff members and visitors, but we can easily assume that for the vast majority they are white. Given this, we are still optimistic enough that the situation will improve in the near future also thanks to specific projects carried out by Italian museums and aimed at the involvement of ethnic minority communities.

Therefore, in response to our research question, we can say that this study showed that people belonging to ethnic minorities still occupy a marginal place and are not represented enough in the contemporary art system, both as producers and as consumers. However, the general context of decoloniality and the influence of the Black Lives Matter movement are giving a boost towards decolonisation, inclusion and diversification. This is valid for the United States as well as for Italy, where we are still behind but there are signs that something is changing even if things got very complicated because of the COVID-19 pandemic that does not allow to organise programs and activities in the long-term.

This study gave a contribution to the body of knowledge on the relation between ethnic minority groups and cultural institutions because it offered an overview of how Italian museums relate to ethnic minorities and none of the existing research has never focused on this specific aspect before. We based the study on statistics and analyses concerning the United States, but also Italy in some cases, and, unfortunately, we got confirmation of the marginalised status in which people belonging to ethnic minorities find themselves inside the art system of Western countries. Thanks to our research and the detailed analysis of some virtuous projects realised by the GAMEC, the MAXXI, and the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, scholars and museum professionals have a starting point for future and more detailed researches on the current situation and have some examples of initiatives and programs that can be put in place by other cultural institutions in different contexts.

The reader should keep in mind that this study has also some limitations due to methodological problems and to the absence of all the needed resources and information. In order to obtain a more reliable insight on the roles that people belonging to ethnic minorities have inside Italian cultural institutions, we should have taken into consideration more than just three case studies and not only the virtuous ones. Furthermore, the analysis of the GAMEC, the MAXXI, and the Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Foundation has some limitations that are due to the lack of fundamental data such as the complete catalogues of the collections of the museums or the information on the country of birth and the ethnicity of the staff members and the visitors. Another limitation is due to the fact that we had not the opportunity to submit questionnaires to the artists in order to establish their ethnicity, therefore, we were obliged to use another strategy, but the criteria we decided to stick to risk to be overly subjective and to oversimplify the actual situation.

In light of this, further research could be based on more reliable and complete data, they could analyse other cultural institutions active on the Italian territory and, before taking into consideration the ethnicity of the various subjects, they could obtain more up-to-date and complete catalogues of the museum collections and they could submit questionnaires to the visitors and the staff members in order to obtain reliable information about their belonging to ethnic groups.

In conclusion, people belonging to ethnic minority groups, be they artists, visitors or staff members, still occupy a marginal position in museums, however things are changing in the United States, but also, with a little delay, in Italy, and cultural institutions are developing strategies in order to include them decolonising and diversifying the representation and interpretation of the world that they offer.

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